In-Flux:

(Re)negotiations of Gender, Identity and 'Home' in Post-war Southern Sudan

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SUMMARY

Can war and displacement have an empowering and emancipating impact on gender asymmetries? How does being continuously on the move and 'in-flux' due to war and years spent being displaced and returning supposedly 'home' affect people's lives and the practice and negotiation of gender relations? Conceptualising war-time displacement as a catalyst of social change, the research explores the transformation of southern Sudanese Nuer gender relations in the context of refugee return as a result of the most recent war (1983-2005). Based on ethnographic research in Kenya and southern Sudan, this thesis examines the gendered displacement of Nuer refugees in Kakuma camp and their after-return emplacement experiences in southern Sudan.

This research analyses how women and men, old and young navigated the social conditions of war and violence and used their agency to adjust, adapt and negotiate their place in exile and after return 'home'. It unravels changing narratives of 'becoming and being' a man and a woman in conflict-zones, refugee camps and in the processes of emplacement after return. It argues that asymmetrical gender relations and women's subordination were challenged as a result of the Sudanese civil wars. Consequently, multiple forms of gender identities emerged showing creative ways in which women and men cope with war-time displacement, beyond being either only victims or perpetrators of violence. In the post-war Nuerland, militarised forms of masculinities and violence-affected femininities are juxtaposed against 'educated pro-women' men and 'empowered educated women' that emerged due to experiences in the refugee camp.

The findings illustrate how gender (and age) are constraining concepts for women and men, yet women's agency and choices are more restricted. The concepts of 'home' as imagined, lived and (re)produced are of key importance in the continuing shaping and re-shaping of gender identities, ideologies and institutions. In the context of after 'return' emplacement, returnee women and girls experience restriction of opportunities despite their attempts at autonomy. The creation of new power sources (through militarisation and education) mostly accessible to men reifies women's subordination by reinforcing men's power over (uneducated) women.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

buul	dance around fire
ca ker	I have awoken (translated as I am civilised/modern)
ciang, pl. *cieng*	village, community, home, culture
ciek	woman-wife, fertile
ciek nuära	Nuer woman-wife, 'real Nuer woman'
cieng kume	government laws, customs
cieng mi pai ben	a new custom/mode of life has arrived; used to describe 'modernity' and 'civilisation' by the Nuer
cieng nuära	Nuer village, community, culture
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
duang	old woman
dhool/dholi	boy/boys
diel	aristocrat
dit	elder
dual	fear
duel (dueel)	house(s), hut(s)
duël gɔ̈arä	school
duëlkuoth	church
fuul	fried beans
gaar	initiation for boys, sacrificial marks on the forehead
gɔ̈ar	education
gallaba	Arab
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
guankuoth	earth priest
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced Population/Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
Jääl	traveller, guest ,visitor
Jieng	Dinka
jiluäk kuoth	Christianity
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
jut	old unmarried girl
(ha)kume	from Arabic, government
kau	young wife without children
keaagh	unmarried concubine, spoilt girl, 'prostitute'
khaway	white foreigners (from Arabic)
koor	war
koor cieng	community war, intra-Nuer
koor kume	government war
kuäar	chief, leader, elder
kuoth Nhial	Divinity, God
luak (luaak)	cattle byre(s)
l*uth*	respect
LWF	Lutheran World Federations
mac	gun

mut	spear
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
nei ti cike ker	people who have awoken, seen light (metaphor for 'modern' people)
nei ti naath	people of the people, the Nuer
nei ti ngac ke ngoani	people who are knowledgeable, who have deeper insights into the workings of the world, who are 'modern'/'civilised'
nueer	pollution
nyabor	daughter of a white man (from Nuer)
nyakhaway	daughter of a foreigner (mixed of Nuer and Arabic)
nyal/nyieri	girl/girls/dauther/daughters
nyal duël gɔ̈arä	school girl
nyal nuära	Nuer girl, 'real Nuer girl'
OCHA	United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
qahwa	coffee (in Arabic)
pöc	*respect*
pöth	small gift (wedding gift) for the bride's mother
raan	human (being), citizen, person
ric	age-set
rool Nuärä	Nuerland
ruok	cattle-based fine
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SPLA/M	Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement
SSRRC	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
thak	oxen
thok	language
tut	bull
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
wa loorä	walk/go aimless, 'loose'
wa nhiam	moving forward; signifies development, progress
WFP	World Food Programme
wic	responsible, wises
wur/wutni	man/men
wur nuära	Nuer man, 'real Nuer man'
yang	cattle
yiou	money
yodh	migration

Map 1. Sudan. Location of Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and trajectory of fieldwork.

Map 2. Planned repatriation of Sudanese refugees, 2006.

CHAPTER 1
BI NIKA?[1]

1. RETURNEE DILEMMAS: DANGEROUS TROUSERS AND THREATENING MINI-SKIRTS

When after years of displacement Nyakuol, Nyariek and Kuok[2] arrived in Ler,[3] a Nuer market centre in southern Sudan's Western Upper Nile region, they were faced with the dilemma of finding long-lost relatives, settling in and confronting local expectations of 'proper behaviour' as 'real' Nuer women and men. Like others displaced during the 22-year long civil wars in southern Sudan (1983-2005), they had spent most of their lives in refugee camps. In the aftermath of the 2005 peace agreement between the Sudanese government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) - the main southern Sudanese rebel organisation - they repatriated to post-war Nuerland. A place they barely remembered or knew, was supposed to become 'home'. Yet, due to their diverse experiences during wars and flight and the changes that took place in southern Sudan, they often felt 'displaced' within their own 'homes'.

Nyakuol, a widow in her 40s, Kuok, a slim, boyish-looking young man in his late 20s, and Nyariek, an 18-year-old young woman, stood out. Nyakuol wore a wig purchased in Nairobi and was always elegantly dressed in Kenyan-made clothes. Kuok wore a bright green shirt and well-ironed trousers, while Nyariek sported tight trousers and red hair extensions. This was unprecedented in Ler where men mostly wore torn sports clothes or cast-off military uniforms, carried spears or guns and women, hidden in their homesteads, had shaved heads and long dresses.

It was not only their appearance that distinguished Nyakuol, Kuok and Nyariek. Daughter of the first chief[4] of Ler, at the age of 15 Nyakuol had married a high-ranking SPLA officer and in 1988 joined him in the military camps in Ethiopia. Nyakuol's husband was one of the SPLA's founding members, the rebel organisation that fought

[1] Bi nika? ("where are you coming from?"), a constant question when Nuer run into each other.
[2] The names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the research participants.
[3] Ler is spelled both Ler and Leer. The first one is the original transliteration from Nuer whereas Leer is the English version of the Nuer term. I follow the Nuer original transliteration and use Ler throughout the thesis.
[4] Government appointed chiefs were introduced as part of administrative structure in southern Sudan during the British colonialism.

against northern domination and discrimination of southerners since 1983. She and her children subsequently moved frequently, following her husband, eventually finding refuge in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp in 1994. After her husband died, from what she described as 'unexplained circumstances', she stayed in Kenya so that her children could continue to access education and health services. Becoming a camp leader, she attended income-generating and gender awareness training courses and started her own alcohol brewing business to sustain her family. In December 2006, she repatriated with most of her children to Ler with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "*I missed my family and wanted to see my home. Kakuma was not a home, and you can only be free in your land*," she told me.

Also born in a nearby village, Kuok spent his childhood herding goats and cattle but in the late 1980s, aged about seven, he was recruited with other local boys by SPLA to training camps in Ethiopia. Thus began a two-decade long journey through multiple displacements and family separation for Kuok. Following the expulsion of SPLA forces and Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia in 1991, Kuok together with 16,000 other boy soldiers walked through southern Sudan to Kenya where he became a refugee at the age of 11. In Kakuma he spent 15 years sharing a household with other boys. I met him there in August 2006 as he was graduating from the Teachers' Training College, the first higher education institute set up for refugees in Africa. In April 2007, Kuok decided to go to Ler, to visit his 'home'.

In the late 1990s at the age of eight Nyariek was taken by her aunt, a niece of a Nuer SPLA commander, to Ethiopia in order to escape northern Sudanese military bombardments. In 2001, they moved to Kakuma where, like Kuok, she went to school. Nyariek finished seventh grade, a remarkable achievement for Nuer girls who are mostly denied education. In February 2007, Nyariek's father who had stayed behind in Sudan asked her to come 'home'. Worried about her safety, he had plans for her to marry.

I followed the lives of Nyakuol, Kuok and Nyariek first in the Kakuma refugee camp and then during their 'homecoming' and settlement in Ler. Their narratives and those of other refugees and returnees who repatriated to southern Sudan constitute the rationale of this thesis.

During my stay in Ler there was continuous controversy around the social norms and dress codes of returnees, which seemed to cause a veritable moral panic among those who stayed behind. Matters came to a head in September 2008 when some 30 women and girls were rounded up and beaten by police in the southern Sudanese capital, Juba, for wearing tight trousers, mini-skirts and fitted t-shirts. Administrators condemned them for their "indecent clothing" and adherence to a "Nigger illicit culture" that was banned.[5] The cultural debate that erupted was not an isolated event for across southern Sudan there has been much controversy over the 'new cultures' introduced by those returning from Khartoum, East Africa and elsewhere. As the *Sudan Tribune* noted, "[T]he incident[s] has[ve] revealed the dilemma south Sudanese are in after the peace in the region" (October 15, 2008). The author called on politicians to speak out on such social issues as dress codes, abortion and racism. He warned that hip-hop is cultural pollution for "undeveloped cities like Juba", leading children astray from their studies:

> […] unregulated culture norms will destroy our social fabric. I believe special measures like Juba city ordinance[6] are needed to safe guard (sic!) our social way of life and democracy. [….] We are all for change (positive one) but spreading hazardous behaviours like seen in Juba should be treated as a crime, because if not brought into an end ultimately it will infest the entire nation (ibid).

The local 'morality initiative' in Juba sparked debate around changes caused by the second civil war (1983-2005), conflict-induced massive displacement in southern Sudan and the different social norms, relations and values brought in by those returning from years, or decades, spent in exile. The moral panic caused by 'baggy trousers and mini-skirts' shows how gender, power and identity are key underlying issues in the contestation of social change embedded in the return of displaced populations. They are the axes of this thesis.

Conceptualising conflict-induced displacement as a catalyst of social change, this thesis explores the transformation of gender relations among the southern Sudanese Nuer in the context of refugee return and 'emplacement' in the aftermath of the second civil

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[5]Several articles appeared in the local Sudanese press following the arrests in Juba (*Sudan Tribune*: October 9 and October 15, 2008) and on the SPLM website (SPLM, October 11, 2008). The Juba Commissioner's Local Order No. 4/2008 referred to a section of Social and Cultural Affairs of Local Government Act 2003 that crimininalised "all bad behaviours, activities and imported illicit cultures". The Order specifically mentioned "Niggers" in Juba County as potential targets, without explaining who qualified as a "Nigger".

[6] Juba Commissioner's Local Order No. 4/2008.

war (1983-2005). Gender relations are the social, economic and political exchanges between women and men as well as within genders in different arenas such as the household, community and the state. They are dynamic and undergo transformation depending on the historical, political, economic, cultural and social environment. Gender is also intertwined with age as power relations change throughout the life-cycle. This thesis considers the production of particular changes in gender (and generational) relations resulting from the abrupt nature and traumatic gendered experiences of conflict-induced displacement. It is about a group of people who escaped 'home' due to violence and wars that tore their communities apart. In the process, their lives are irreversibly changed in unexpected and differentiated ways. Years and decades later, in the aftermath of repatriation, they come together to (re)create and (re)build a home and a community.

I ask whether war and displacement can have an empowering and emancipating impact, questioning some gender asymmetries in patriarchal societies. How does being 'in-flux' between war, prolonged displacement – sometimes for decades – belonging, not belonging and returning to a supposed 'home' affect people's lives and the practice and negotiation of gender relations? Being 'in-flux' refers here not only to being 'out of place' from one's own environment due to war, but also to transforming cultural practices in refugee camps and after return. I develop this concept in chapter 2. A closer look at the experiences of the displacement and emplacement after 'return' reveals how women and men continuously negotiate and reshape their gender identities and relations in and between the different settings of displacement and emplacement. While lesser opportunities exist for women to reverse their subordination upon return to southern Sudan, they actively contest, resist and (re)negotiate old and new hegemonies (of male privilege).

This chapter outlines the overarching theme, rationale and the outline of the thesis. The first section provides the rationale for the research and situates the key research questions. I then briefly introduce the research sites and the specific areas of enquiry situated against the backdrop of the changing post-war landscape of southern Sudan. Lastly, I sketch out the overall argument of the thesis and provide a short outline of the chapters.

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The focus of this thesis is on practice and (re)negotiation of gender relations in the context of war-induced displacement and post-return emplacement. Why is this important? Forced displacement, exile and uprootedness, be they due to conflict, natural disasters or so-called development and climate change, are conditions that mark the lives of millions of people throughout the world. In 2008, over 35 million people remained displaced. In 2009, within a few months, in Pakistan alone, three million people became displaced due to conflict. New forms of displacement due to natural disasters such as the January 2010 Haitian earthquake or the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami have prompted the international community to consider the emergence of 'ecological refugees'. Regardless of its reasons, displacement affects (albeit differently) women and men, old and young, and changes their lives dramatically. (Forced) mobility of populations, whether in the context of displacement or return, is not going away in the near future. It is therefore necessary to examine its gendered and generational nature.

There is a strong reason to consider the case of displacement in southern Sudan. The country has been at war for over five decades since gaining independence from Britain in 1956, with numerous periods of displacement and conflicts affecting the population (see chapter 4). The political and civil turmoil that erupted in southern Sudan as a result of the conflict between the government in Khartoum and the southern rebels which restarted in 1983 claimed over two million lives and resulted in one of the largest displacements in the world. Over five million people were internally displaced and another 500,000 sought refuge in neighbouring countries (International Crisis Group 2002). The Sudanese government is considered by analysts to be the principal actor fuelling violence, enacting discriminatory measures against the southern Sudanese and displacing them in order to gain control over southern oil reserves (International Crisis Group 2002; El Jack 2007). The signing of a peace agreement in January 2005 between the government in Khartoum and the SPLA – the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) – made possible the ongoing return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to southern Sudan, both spontaneous and organised by UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration and other actors.

I also have a personal reason that motivated me to explore the particular gender (and generational) aspect of (forced) displacement. In 1917, the Bolshevik revolution resulted in substantial displacement which included Poles who had been living in eastern Russia under tsarist rule. Considered as enemies of the revolution due to their aristocratic background, my great-great grandfather was killed and his wife and a 17-year-old daughter (my great-grandmother) were taken to labour camps in Siberia. They managed to escape and walked thousands of kilometres across Russia to Warsaw. I grew up listening to my great-grandmother's stories of their will to survive, to cope and how this experience and journey empowered her. "*I learned that even as a woman you can be strong; it taught me how to be independent and how to take care of myself and my family even in the absence of men*," she often told us.

Thus, my life trajectory led me to focus on conflict-induced displacement and forced migration. For the past 12 years, I have been working on these issues in South-East Asia, West Africa and the Middle East. Between 2002-2005, as a researcher at the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Centre of the American University in Cairo, I researched urban livelihoods of Sudanese refugees. I found how possibilities of working as domestic workers for Egyptian or foreign families enabled Sudanese women to become the main breadwinners for their families (Grabska 2006a). Men, on the other hand, suffered a loss of their previous status as providers of livelihoods. As other forced displacement research shows, the lives of refugees whether in camps, urban areas or in local settlements, are highly gendered, with men and women experiencing a change in their livelihoods strategies and socio-economic status (Kibreab 1995; Hyndmann 2004; Hyndmann and Giles forthcoming; Turner 1999, 2000; Szczepanikova 2005; Jaji 2009). For the southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo, the partial reversal of gender division of labour had important implications for gender relations in general. The experience of forced displacement created some emancipatory opportunities for Sudanese women who through the control over financial resources were able to negotiate greater rights and freedoms within the household (Lejukole 2000; Grabska 2006a). This situation prompted me to ask to what extent such forced displacement-induced emancipation is 'durable' when "refugees go home". How are changes in gender and generational relations due to war and life in displacement (re)negotiated and (re)constructed after 'return' to a place of origin? The existing

forced displacement literature is rather silent on those issues.[7] To benefit from my knowledge of the Sudanese refugees, I decided to continue my doctoral inquiry into the effects of war-induced displacement on this population.

This thesis attempts to address one of the most visible gaps in forced displacement and refugee studies, gender- and generational-blindedness (see chapter 2). This is especially evident in the context of return and emplacement practices of the displaced. The dominant view is that "the work is on refugees who happen to be women rather than on women and men who happen to be refugees" (Indra 1999: 224). Gender (and generational) analysis of displacement, refugee experience and emplacement after refugee return was the departure point of this research and involved looking at "how both men and women [young and old] (re)construct social relations and renegotiate gender identities and relations in the process of coping with forced migration" (Willems 2003: 19) both in the place of displacement and post-return emplacement.

In this context, my research question was simple: I wanted to know how forced displacement affects gender and intergenerational power structures embedded in the social institutions of marriage, gender identity and division of labour and how gender relations are being (re)negotiated upon the return of refugees. My research among Nuer refugees and those who had stayed behind focuses on a set of very specific transformations in gender and generational relations. These include the emergence of diversified masculinities as a result of war-time militarisation, emerging women autonomous households, women's access to income through education and paid work, changes in marriage and divorce practice, changes in livelihoods, control over resources and discourse around rights. The aim of the research was not only to document these, but also to ask how Nuer women and men, young and old are coping with the transformative nature of these events in refugee camps and after return.

3. Research sites, questions and Nuer women and men's gendered encounters with displacement, emplacement and 'modernities'

My inquiry into gendered processes of war, displacement and emplacement after 'return' was conducted among the Nuer - after the Dinka the largest ethnic group in

[7] A few exceptions include Kibreab 2003 and Lubkemann 2008.

southern Sudan - one of the most celebrated peoples in anthropology.[8] Since my aim was to provide a historic account for the changes and continuities in gender relations, I chose the Nuer who are particularly well-studied. Evans-Pritchard's research in the late 1930s among the central Nuer resulted in three volumes (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 1951, 1956) documenting their lives, institutional and social organisation, livelihood strategies, religious beliefs, kinship and marriage. In the 1980s and 1990s, Sharon Hutchinson examined the changing nature of Nuer gender relations as a result of war, the emerging market economy and the transformative influence of the state. Her historical ethnography *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (1996) demonstrates how myriad 'global' and 'local' forms of power and knowledge are empirically intertwined in the everyday experiences of the Nuer. These historical accounts combined with my in-depth interviews with men and women elders in Kenya and southern Sudan allowed me to establish a baseline for studying change and transformation.

This study builds on the research of social change among the Nuer and captures a particular moment in the lives of the contemporary Nuer, which is marked by rapid social transformations and change resulting from wars, encounters with 'modernity' in Kakuma forged by UN humanitarianism, massive refugee repatriation and the gradual creation of a southern Sudanese state in the aftermath of the CPA. They are situated against a backdrop of globalisation and changing notions of modernities in Africa (see Hodgson and McCurdy 2001). My aim is to contribute to Sudanese, African and forced displacement scholarship by providing a gender and generational perspective on the effects of conflict-induced displacement.

In order to capture the displaced and fragmented trajectories of the lives of the Nuer and understand the changing practice of gender (and generational) relations, I followed their lives as refugees in Kakuma camp located in northern Kenya and then in southern Sudan. I accompanied Nuer returnees to Ler, a market centre in Western Upper Nile region, studying and observing how the returning displaced were piecing their lives together (see map 1). Thus, this thesis is about journeys, survival, (re)creation and

[8] See chapter 3 for the choice of the Nuer; chapter 4 for the background of the Nuer.

change, transformations and continuities. To this extent, what follows is an ethnography of displacement and of emplacement (see chapter 3).

In Kakuma, I collected refugees' narratives around gender ideas, norms and relations as practiced before the recent war. I asked about the strategies employed by women and men, old and young to cope with violence during wars. In particular, I investigated how processes of 'becoming and being' a woman or a man had changed for the Nuer during wars and consequently in refugee camps. In Kakuma, I was interested in the impact of humanitarian and development programmes (particularly educational and empowerment interventions targetting women and girls) on gender identities, norms and division of labour. I examined some of the changes in gender relations in the institution of marriage and explored whether changing norms were giving rise to more equal gender relations. I subsequently investigated gender and generational differences in decision-making to repatriate and followed Nuer refugees on their journeys 'home'.

Ler, a small county headquarters inhabited by the Dok Nuer[9] in the Unity state of southern Sudan's Western Upper Nile Nuer region[10] was the site of the second phase of my fieldwork. A place in flux, it illustrated the ongoing dilemmas facing southern Sudanese emerging from long-term conflict. Ler was a place of 'returnees' – a melting pot of those who had been displaced to different parts of Sudan and across its borders and who have undergone different experiences during the war. Processes of 'homecoming' and settling in involved making either a foreign space (for those who had settled elsewhere or who had been born in exile) or a war-changed familiar space into a familial and comfortable environment. Emplacement involved negotiation, practice and (re)construction of social, economic and cultural activities and social, especially gender, relations. In chapter 2, I develop the concept of gendered emplacement based on the conceptualisation of emplacement proposed by Laura Hammond (2004a).

[9] Nuer are divided into clans and *cieng* (sub-clans). The dominant clan of Ler county is Dok or Adok, subdivided into seven *cieng*.

[10] Unity (Arabic: الوحدة; transliterated: al-Wahda) with Bentiu as its capital is one of the 26 *wilayat* or states of Sudan. An area of 35,956 km² in 2000 it had approximately 175,000 inhabitants, mostly Nuer, and a Dinka minority. It has nine counties comprising Mayom, Rubkona, Parieng, Ler, Guit, Koch, Abiemnom, Mayendit and Panyiajiar, and is the location of some rich oil fields. While the national government in Khartoum maintains the name Unity, the new autonomous government of South Sudan refers to the state as Western Upper Nile.

In this context, I asked how women and men, young and old coped with settling-in after 'return'. Intrigued by the above-mentioned moral panics caused by the behaviour of returnee women and youth, I examined the contestations of gender ideas, norms, identities and practices that 'return' of the displaced prompted in their relations with those who had stayed behind. I asked about the gendered discourses and imaginings that people (women and men, boys and girls) used with reference to 'home' and 'return'. I explored how the emplacement and community creation process impact (re)negotiations around marriage and access to resources and rights at personal and community levels. Life stories are not only expressed through words. They are also conveyed through bodies or, in Judith Butler's words, the gendered performance.[11] I thus asked how gender identities and subjectivities were being re-configured depending on the context (in Kakuma and in Ler). My analytical emphasis is on those gender values, concepts, practices and institutions that contemporary Nuer women and men, old and young, refugees, returnees and stayees, perceived as changing and were in the process of collectively redefining during post-war community formation.

4. THESIS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND OUTLINE

Following the changes in gender relations prompted by colonialism, state formation and Christianity examined by Hutchinson (1996), this thesis shows how gender ideas, identities and practices have been challenged by the recent war, especially by southern Sudanese inter- and intra-community violence. Wars and displacement have had an ambiguous effect on gender relations, giving rise to both weakened and reinforced femininities and masculinities. Gender asymmetries and women's subordination has been reinforced in some spheres but there has also been the emergence of women-led autonomous households and women taking up new informal sector economic activities to ensure family survival. Women's access to employment in refugee camps combined with international aid to refugees has further undermined the (traditional) material bases of male authority. These challenges have been reinforced by gender-mainstreaming programmes run by international organisations in Kakuma and by greater education opportunities for women and girls in the camp. Women's access to

[11] Butler 1990.

'protection' programmes offered by UNHCR and non-governmental organisations, and resettlement possibilities for women and girls at risk of (male) gender violence, has prompted men to perceive women's 'empowerment' in Kakuma as a challenge to male power and position. I examine how the particular 'modern' femininities and masculinities forged in Kakuma challenge the gender structures of power by undermining the patriarchal concept of men being 'in charge' of women and children. At the same time, there is an emerging reinforcement of new sources of male privilege. In spite of difficulties of reaching definitive conclusions regarding directionality of change in gender relations in complex and in-flux situations, the case of the Nuer reveals signs of reinforcement of some aspects of female subordination as well as emerging new opportunities for women's empowerment.

The dynamic ways and the dynamism that both returnee women and men employ in negotiating and shaping their gender identities and relations in Kakuma and in Nuerland reveal their agency in (re)shaping gender relations. Despite more limited choices for women upon return to Nuerland, women (and some returnee men) continue to contest male privilege and the emerging forms of male hegemony. This thesis reveals that women's empowerment and emergence of alternative masculinities (pro-gender equality) are not linear processes but rather contingent on the cultural milieu in which they occur. The emerging gender relations are thus in-flux. 'In-flux' denotes the fluidity and transiting of gender identities and relations that takes place in the movement between places in which these identities are shaped.

This thesis also shows that the process of settling-in and emplacement is experienced differently depending on individual experiences during displacement and people's social and economic capital. Those who were displaced for shorter periods of time, and who had access to family networks and previous property after 'return', settled in faster. For those displaced to Khartoum and exposed to Arab cultural practices, transformation of gender relations was fundamentally different than for those who were subjected to gender-equality programming in the Kakuma camp. These different settings produced diverse transformations of gender relations. In the context of return, this results in complex challenges to gender norms and relations, both creating spaces to undermine material sources of men's domination over women and yet reinforcing them through new definitions of power. These are linked to access to formal education,

government positions, formal employment, intimidation resulting from the new access to weapons and to post-war state-formation and development.

This thesis has important implications for social anthropology, gender and forced displacement studies. The war-induced displacement setting chosen as a framework for the thesis allows us to better understand the lived gender experiences as well as (re)negotiation of gender power relations. By employing feminist analysis which centres gender, age, as well as other axes of difference, this study breaks away from men and women's independent experiences of displacement and mobility. It underscores the relational nature of gender (and age), and improves our understanding of the continuities and discontinuities of gender practices under rapid social change. It also underscores the particular resistance of gender hegemonies despite challenges to the material basis of patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988; Kabeer 1994). My findings suggest that gender asymmetries are constraining for both women and men. They are also fluid and contingent on places in which they occur. Yet despite changing sources of power new gender hegemonies emerge. Although some women who enjoy access to resources and education as new basis of power manage to negotiate greater freedoms, those lacking these privileges suffer additional subordination. In particular, this thesis contributes to the understanding of challenges posed by forced displacement for young women and men and how their gendered desires and aspirations are altered during displacement and post-return emplacement.

This thesis also underscores that despite the growing notions of the condition of 'mobile homes' due to increased mobility of people, 'home' as attached to a specific place still matters. Especially, for refugees who are denied access to basic rights in most settlement places, 'home' acquires a territorial meaning linked to land, citizenship rights and social relations. My research is situated within the debates around the gendered and generational nature of 'home' (see Gardner 2002). For the Nuer, 'home' as a site of social, economic and political relations and linked to a specific place is experienced differently depending on age, gender and point in person's lifecycle.

To reflect some of the Nuer meanings of daily life, including war, displacement and livelihood strategies, I use the metaphor of ecological seasons as understood and lived by the Nuer. As elder women and men often told me, despite changes that have taken

place in the lives of the agro-pastoralist Nuer communities, their continue to be closely linked to their environment, landscape and cattle. In the past, ecological constraints influenced their social relations in an environment with a distinctive rhythm of backwards and forwards movement from villages to cattle camps, the Nuer's response to the climatic dichotomy of rains and drought. This continues to be a case for those Nuer women and men who still rely on cattle herding and agriculture, especially those who had stayed behind in villages. The elder women and men whom I encountered in Kenya and in Nuerland explained that the year (*ruon*) has two main seasons, *tot* (rain) and *mai* (drought). They also pointed out to two transitional periods between *tot* and *mai*, *rwil* (movement from camp to village) and *jiom* (wind). Throughout my stay in Nuerland, women and men, young and old used these terms to identify changes in both ecological conditions but also their changing ways of life throughout the year.

This thesis has nine chapters. Chapter Two sets out the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the thesis. I define the key concepts which anchor my arguments, such as gender, power and culture, while explaining the gender and generational relations lens which I use to analyse change and continuities of Nuer gender relations. The chapter also situates the study in the wider anthropological, migration, forced displacement and refugee studies literature and points to key contributions of the thesis. It also sets out the analytical context of return and repatriation of Nuer refugees to southern Sudan by developing the concept of gendered emplacement. It situates the on-going transformations of gender and generational relations within the context of the Nuers' encounters with 'modernities' both in refugee camps and after 'return'.

Chapter Three addresses the issues of methodology, research methods, design and strategies. I reflect on the ethical and moral dilemmas facing a feminist researcher carrying out fieldwork in refugee camps and post-conflict southern Sudan.

Chapter Four provides a background on the emergence of 'the south'[12] within Sudan and the causes of the second civil war. In particular, I sketch out the different nature of the most recent war and the ensuing south-south violence that had dramatic gender consequences for the southern Sudanese population. I also provide an overview of the

[12] The 'south' refers here to the southern part of Sudan as opposed to the 'global South'.

historical literature on the Nuer and in particular on the changes in gender concepts, practices and norms. Situating current transformations of Nuer gender relations in history I follow Joan Scott's point that gender is a useful tool for historical analysis. It also provides an avenue for a longer-term historisation of the in-flux gender relations.

Chapter Five – *jiom* (wind) – considers the effects of recent wars and violence in southern Sudan on gender relations. I conceptualise war as a social condition, rather than only a destructive force, and ask how conditions of war present both challenges and opportunities for gender relations. I explore the socio-cultural effects of war and violence, focusing on the gendered experiences of mobility during war and displacement to Kakuma. Through examining diverse trajectories of displacement, I explore the multiple experiences of living in war-zones, determined by gender, age and social status. This chapter reveals the contradictory effects of war on gender relations, which sustain, foster or subvert specific ethnicised, racialised and communalised femininities and masculinities, producing multiple femininities and identities. It also seeks to identify who gains and who loses from community militarisation and how gender practices and norms embedded in gender divisions within labour and marriage are shifting.

Chapter Six – *mai* (drought) - explores experiences of gendered lives in Kakuma camp in the context of the production of 'modernity' through global UN humanitarianism, gendered modernity and its implications for gender relations. The impact of changed livelihoods, education, and gender and human rights projects are analysed through the construction, negotiation and practice of gender identities, division of labour and marriage. I also show how new 'modern' discourses of gender-equality and women's rights and the emerging diverse forms of femininities and masculinities are contested and challenged by talk of 'our culture'. Kakuma as a (foreign) space not a *cieng nuära* (Nuer village/home) opened up possibilities for (re)negotiation of gender norms and practices. Yet at the same time, this gendered 'modernity' was a temporal opportunity, undermining some of the gender and generational asymmetries among the Nuer communities.

Chapter Seven – *rwil* a metaphor of post-war 'return to the village' – follows the lives of Nuer refugees settling in Ler. It examines how gendered experiences and notions of

'home', 'return' and emplacement are produced differently when gender, age, socio-economic and marital status and length of exile are taken into account. I also consider the different processes of settling in and emplacement through gendered access to land and livelihoods, and in the context of 'modernity' creeping into Nuerland. What are the effects of gendered emplacement on the reordering of gender relations in general? How does the emergence of autonomous women households, women's access to paid employment and changes in livelihood strategies challenge, contest or conform to prevailing ideas about gender division of labour? Tensions between returnees and those who had stayed behind illuminate some of the contestations around the changing notions of gender relations.

Chapter Eight – *tot* (rain) – focuses on the social and gender aspects of settling in and emplacement. I examine how masculinities and femininities are socially intertwined with the notions of community and 'home' and how settling in and place-making become part of the (re)negotiation of gender identities practiced in Kakuma. I then show how emplacement for the young involves initiation of a marriage process, discussing how notions of marriage and conjugal relations are being transformed. This chapter demonstrates how gendered processes of settling in play out on subjectivities and in opening up or constraining the expanded freedoms and autonomy gained by youth in Kakuma. The perceived 'transgression' of gender norms is contested and confronted by those who had stayed behind. These inter-generational and gender confrontations reveal the tensions and transitions of the social and gender basis of Nuer communities.

Chapter Nine summarises the central themes and conclusions of the thesis. I offer an analysis of evolving gender relations among the Nuer since the onset of the 1983 conflict and point to some of the contestations and negotiations of the current transformations in gender relations. I discuss the causation of transformations in gender ideas and practices, pointing to the tensions and contestations that they affect during the displacement and emplacement processes. I conclude with an overview of the thesis' significance for social anthropology, forced displacement, development and gender studies and Sudanese and African scholarship and identify areas for future research.

P.S. Ethnography is a form of representation and I have presented a partial story. Despite my endeavour to follow narratives of Nuer women and men and minimise the power imbalance between the researcher and the research participants, I had to make, often uncomfortable, choices as to which stories to tell. This was particularly difficult when analysing the fragmented stories of families separated during the wars. Through the collection of family stories, I tried to piece together the fragmented and diverse experiences of the household members. Often these experiences were marked by silences and interruptions, not only due to constant and abrupt movement resulting from the ensuing violence and insecurity, but more importantly as a result of death that has constantly accompanied the lives of the Nuer for the past two and a half decades. The story telling, and what follows, re-creation of people's lives and experiences during conflict, flight and 'return', is not only a matter of creating either personal or social meanings. Here, I concur with Michael Jackson's interpretation of Hannah Arendt's view of the politics of storytelling, where "the multiplicity of private and public interests" are intertwined and simultaneously at play, where the story becomes an aspect of "the subjective in-between" (Jackson 2008: ii; Arendt 1958: 182-184). Cautioned by their attention to the violent and hegemonic nature of story telling and the role of the researcher who has a power to decide which stories to reveal, I remain conscious that apart from the stories shared with me and told here, there are many that lingered and linger in the shadows.

CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUALISING GENDER IN DISPLACEMENT AND EMPLACEMENT

In this chapter I outline my conceptual and analytical framework, and locate my research questions within the wider literature. I start with a discussion of key analytical concepts: gender as interlinked with power and practices and 'in-flux' of gender relations correlated with displacement-induced social change and transformation. Next, I situate the displacement-induced changes in the Nuer gender relations within their encounters with particular gendered 'modernities' in the refugee and after-war settings. I propose a feminist analysis as the lens through which to look at changes in gender relations. A brief overview of the literature on gender, conflict and mobility locates my research questions and contributions. I then critique conceptualisations of 'displacement' and 'return' within a broader discussion of the concept of 'place' and mobility (Marx 1990; Appadurai 1996; Feld and Basso 1996; Turton 2005). Finally, I discuss the concept of gendered emplacement, as the conceptual basis for the analysis of changes in post-'return'gender relations. The thesis is located at the crossroads of gender, conflict-induced mobility and emplacement studies.

1. GENDER AND DISPLACEMENT-INDUCED SOCIAL CHANGE

1.1. Gender, age and subordination

The focus of my inquiry is the construction of gender in its social form through the daily experience, negotiation, expression and practice of gender relations. I explore how abrupt experiences of rupture of the social fabric due to war, displacement and life in refugee camps influence (re)negotiation of gender relations. In this section I consider three other theoretical aspects of gender: gender as practised and negotiated; gender power asymmetries and gender in social institutions.

In order to clarify often-contested definitions, I first turn to 'gender' which much current literature repeatedly associates with 'women'. Gender denotes the social constructions of what it means to be female and male in a particular time in a given society. Gender is distinguished from sex, where, as Kimmel points out, "sex refers to

the biological apparatus […]. Gender refers to the meanings that are attached to those differences within a culture" (2004: 3).[13]

Gender alone is, however, insufficient to analyse, understand and write about relations of power, identities and the lives of women and men amidst conflict and displacement. The literature and humanitarian and development programming often deploy 'gender' to attract funding, rather than stemming from a genuine desire to understand gender power relations (see Hyndman and de Alwis 2003, 2008; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007). So as not to render gender invisible and irrelevant, I follow Hyndman and de Alwis and go beyond gender *per se* to include multiple bases of identity and social relations (2008: 87). Such an intersectional feminist framework includes "interlocking systems of class, caste, religion, sexuality, nationality, and membership in social groups" (cf. Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou and Moussa 2008: 216).

For my study, one important dimension in the experiences of gender relations is age. Evans-Pritchard's discussion of age-sets as an organising principle of manhood among the Nuer generated numerous age-focused ethnographic studies in East Africa (e.g. Spencer 1976; Foner and Kertzer 1978; Bernardi 1985). Evans-Pritchard's interpretations were products of his position in the colonialist enterprise and a particular time when the ethnographic fieldwork took place. Yet, the concepts of age and age-sets, as confirmed by the Nuer men and women in Kakuma and Nuerland, continue to shape gender relations. Aguilar points out in the introduction to his edited volume *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa* (1998) that:

> the passing of age as a universal, human and biological process can only be fully understood by looking at its cultural – and therefore localised – processes of construction, perception, change and adaptation. Perceptions of age do not arise from a given definition but by sociality, from daily and habitual human activities… With Africa at large in mind, it is possible to argue that older people are given some kind of recognition, and that old age seems to be regarded as an attribute rather than a hindrance (1998: 9).

Age and seniority are fundamentally intertwined with gender relations and gender identities (e.g., Hodgson and McCurdy 2001). As discussed in chapter 4, the narratives

[13] Following Foucalt's argument in *The History of Sexuality* that sex is an effect rather than an origin and a product of specific discursive practices, the biological binary determinism of sex has been also questioned. See Butler (1999) and Yanagisako and Collier (1987) for further critique.

of Nuer women and men suggest that gender power is relative and changes over the life-cycle. Being a boy of a certain age implies different gendered responsibilities, rights and privileges than those of a girl, man or woman. Girls and women are able to correct their lower status within the household and community through progressive acquisition of power due to reproduction and transfer of resources (Hutchinson 1980). As other studies on youth in Africa have shown (Utas 2003; De Boeck and Honwana 2004; Christiansen et al 2006a; Vigh 2007), daily confrontations and contestations between young and old, women and men, are part and parcel of the ever-changing social structures of African societies, particularly in the context of conflicts and migration. I incorporate the discussion of age and generations as intertwined with gender to unpack the actual gender relations and contestation around power, but also to better understand, analyse and potentially transform situations of perpetuated violence, inequality, discrimination and injustice (Hyndman and de Alwis 2008). These intersectional categories produce different gender relations and identities across time and space. A feminist analytic including an age component permits better understanding and analysis of the effects of forced displacement on the production, negotiation and transformation of age-infused gender relations and the diverse experiences that displaced men and women go through.

Much of the literature on gender analyses women's subordination in isolation from men, thus ignoring the relational nature of gender. I agree with Ann Whitehead that we "cannot start from the viewpoint that the problem is women, but rather men and women, and more specifically the socially constituted relations between them" (1979: 10). This study is not about women, but how gender is a constraining social concept for both women and men, boys and girls. It determines relations not only between, but also among, the same sex.

I am interested in the everyday practice and (re) negotiation of gender relations embedded in gender identities, marriage process and household relations. This study conceptualises gender as social relations analysis. This framework allows for examining change, transformation and continuity of gender relations by taking a holistic approach and including other forms of social differentiation. These transformations might affect the allocation of tasks and the dynamics of appropriation and control over resources and labour in gendered spheres. Social relations analysis

takes us beyond the gender roles framework's focus on the household (Razavi and Miller 1995: 28) but rather allows investigation of social constructions, meanings and practices of gender relations in a wide set of arenas. It allows me to consider issues of rights, norms and values that sustain social relations (entitlements based on gender identity), what Pearson, Whitehead and Young refer to as "practice of everyday life" (1981: x). My thesis asks: what are the precise terms under which men and women co-operate in the specific institutions through which social groups acquire resources and entitlements (marriage, household, the community, the market and the state) (Kabeer 1994) and through which such co-operation is structured (Razavi and Miller 1995: 29)? As Kabeer argues, "the relational analysis of gender inequality within the development process has far reaching implications, as it goes beyond questions of male prejudice and preconceptions to look at the institutionalisation of male power and privilege" (2004: xiii). Such approach allows me to go beyond the domestic and household analysis of power relations "to wider institutions of social, political, cultural and economic organisation" (ibid). Or put simply, it lets us enter the realm of gender politics. Consequently, feminist analysis unpacks and provides avenues for addressing the problems of women's subordination.

As this thesis demonstrates, gender, although socially constructed and fluid, remains one of the most enduring ideologies in all societies. Whitehead identifies gender as part of any social relations: "Gender then, like race, is never absent, and ambiguities about gender are more or less poorly tolerated" (1979: 11). It is often expressed through gender asymmetry of women's subordination to men. This asymmetrical social relation is reflective of my view of gender relations among the Nuer communities in southern Sudan and elsewhere. Ortner argues that "[T]he secondary status of woman in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact" (1996: 21). She warns, however, that the specific conceptions of woman are culturally diverse, at times contradictory, and fluid over time and space (ibid). Initially, women's subordination was explained through two strands of anthropological theory. The first located it in the fact that women, due to their reproductive functions, are associated with nature. Men, due to association with culture, are in charge of women and children. Ortner (1974) stressed that devaluation of nature vis-à-vis culture accounted for the hierarchical relations between men and women. The second theory ascribed women's inferiority to their roles being associated with the domestic sphere while men were linked to the public

sphere of social life (see Rosaldo 1974). These theories have been since devalued and the concepts of nature, culture, public and domestic spheres have themselves been judged historically and culturally variable (see Moore 1988; MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Strathern 1984; Rosaldo 1980). The gender division of labour represented as reproduction and production and described as occurring in distinct spheres is flawed as these spheres are often intertwined for women (Whitehead 1981; Harris 1981; Yuval-Davis 1997).

The central point of this argument relevant to my thesis is that the endurance of women's subordination is linked to its embededness in social institutions, structures and everyday practices that normalise and reproduce asymmetrical relations between women and men (Jackson and Scott 2002; Whitehead 1979; Oakley 2005; Moore 1988; Kabeer 1994; Kandiyoti 1988; Razavi and Miller 1995). For the Nuer women, their subordination is embedded in the institution of marriage and linked to bridewealth that determines responsibilities, entitlements and status within the household and the wider community (see chapter 4). I thus ask whether and how changes prompted by war, displacement and mobility undermine, re(configure) and challenge the material basis of gender asymmetry?

My approach to gender relations combines three themes: hegemony, norms and practices.

1.2. 'Our culture' as hegemony: gender norms and practices

Academic and policy discourses of gender remain often static. They draw on static notions of cultures while culture is often used to legitimise existing gender practices. The Nuer in Kakuma and in southern Sudan also invoked 'culture' (*cieng nuära*) as an explanation of embedded gender norms and ideas. 'Our culture'[14] was used by those who felt threatened by the changes in gender relations taking place both in Kakuma and in Ler (see chapters 6 and 8). What interested me was the fixed, static and hegemonic portrayal of 'culture' as presented in the evocation of cieng nuara by especially elder

[14] 'Our culture' was an English term used by the Nuer in Kakuma and in southern Sudan. The Nuer term, *cieng nuära*, had a wider connotation invoking 'community', 'household', 'home'. For full discussion, see chapter 6.

women and (and also younger) men. Discourses around 'our culture' as relating to gender norms, ideas, practices and relations were at stake in the turbulent social changes experienced by the Nuer women and men in a refugee camp in Kenya and in post-war Nuerland. In the first setting, gender equality was being promoted by the international refugee regime, an imposition of the UN's global commitment to gender-mainstreaming (see chapter 6). In southern Sudan the process of state formation enabled by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the southern Sudanese interim-constitution was strongly emphasising equality and rights for women. Gender was a contentious subject in household, community and national discussions. I asked how these changing life circumstances for the predominantly agro-pastoralist Nuer communities affect individual and community perceptions, ideas, identities and practices of gender relations? How do discourses of 'our culture' come about, how and by whom are they sustained and how and by whom are they challenged? To understand the social relations of the multiple, yet not equally powerful voices, which shape gender practices and transgressions of gender norms, and inspired by Cowan's analysis of gender hegemonic ideologies embedded in dance and the body politics in northern Greece (1990), I decided to follow Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'.[15]

Gramsci may not have considered gender when exploring class-consciousness, yet his concept of hegemony of power might explain the mechanisms of and the role of men, and also women, who maintain patriarchal institutions. His writings on hegemony help to understand the relationship between consciousness and socio-political authority, that has relevance for (re)production and sustenance of gender norms. They offer an alternative explanation to those proposed by the models of consensus and contract in classical political theory and the model of false consciousness in orthodox Marxism. Femia reiterates Gramsci's explanation:

> The supremacy of a social group or class manifest itself in two different ways: 'domination' [*dominio*] or coercion, and 'intellectual and moral leadership" [*direzione intellettuale e morale*]. His latter type of supremacy constitutes hegemony. Social control, in other words, takes two basic forms: besides influencing behaviour and choice e*xternally*, through rewards and punishments, it also affects them internally, by moulding personal convictions into a replica of prevailing norms. Such 'internal control' is based on hegemony, which refers to an order in which a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant,

[15] See also Ortner 1996.

> informing with its sprit all modes of thought and behaviour. It follows that hegemony is the predominance obtained by *consent* rather than force of one class or group over other classes (1981: 24).

'Hegemony' helps explain the process of shifting gender relations among the Nuer in Kakuma and in Ler. It is a more fitting concept than 'culture' to explain the persistence of gender power asymmetries. Hegemony has been defined as "the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" (Williams 1977: 110) or groups. 'Hegemony' as an analytical concept opens up the possibility of problematising, rather than assuming, a moral consensus expressed through discourse around 'our culture'. It allows analysis of how members of different social groups accept, redefine, 'transgress', or contest dominant gender ideas. It elucidates the relationship between agency and structure (Cowan 1990: 13).

Hegemony is best understood as a process, rather than as a totalising concept such as 'culture' that is "practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values" (Williams 1977: 108). It entails the possibility of resistance, contestation and accommodation. Although hegemony penetrates individual consciousness, it is never a totally determining process. Williams argues that:

> A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. …. It does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own (1977: 108-112).

The conceptual framework of hegemony allows me to analyse how dominant discourses of cultural gender norms come about, how they are contested, resisted and (re)negotiated by women and men, young and old. It is vital when examining the challenges posed by gender equality rhetoric in Kakuma and the confrontation of competing gender (and generational) discourses and practices between returnees and stayees in Ler. The concept of hegemony helps us examine the subtle, often invisible, dynamics of power embedded in individuals' social relations and how (gender) inequalities persist. As the empirical material suggests, these expressions of acquiescence and of contestation of gender norms used by gendered persons are both complex and contradictory. What emerges is "the eternally incomplete nature of hegemony, with the cultural as a contested, contingent political field, the battlefield in an ongoing 'war of position' (Gupta and Ferguson 2001: 5).

When educated Nuer girls in Kakuma express their views and confront their male relatives (see chapter 6) they are contesting and upsetting relations of domination by men over women and elders over younger generations. This reinforces the view that power relations are not eternally fixed, but rather fluid, contested, continuously reworked and maintained. As the empirical material on gender relations transformations in Kakuma and after return to Ler shows, social agents through their active practice and negotiation, continuously reinterpret and reappropriate 'culture(s)' in their own ways rather than simply enacting it/them. The struggles around gender ideologies and identities represent struggles for power and the ability to maintain one's own strategic position.

Acts of acquiescence and resistance are intertwined in a complex manner, as hegemony binds subordinate groups. Groups that might be in subordinate positions often maintain dominant ideas in order not to lose their perceived position. Hannah Arendt (1971) points out that "power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert." This might allow us to ask about the microlevel mechanisms behind the discourse of 'our culture' among the elder male Nuer. How do such discourses legitimise gender norms and keep women in subordinate positions? Why and how some (older) women exercise power and control over other (younger) women and as a result maintain the patriarchal prerogative? The macrolevel analysis will be concerned with the background of particular power relations. As Allen asserts, "it examines the cultural meanings, practices, and larger structures of domination that make up the context within which a particular power relation is able to emerge" (ibid.) What are the particular circumstances under which Nuer women and girls' power is practised? How do changing social circumstances enable or constraint them in acquiring greater possibilities for autonomy, contestation and freedom within Nuer social institutions?

1.3. Gender practices: identities, marriage and household relations

My particular interest is in hegemony as a gender lived experience of the displaced Nuer expressed through practice and (re)negotiation of gender identities, marriage and household relations.

El-Bushra defines identity as a social process whereby individuals come to identify themselves with a particular configuration of social roles and relationships (2000: 67). In delineating *gender identity* I borrow Lindsay and Miescher's definition (2003) of masculinity (and femininity) as a cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns which express "explicit and implicit expectations of how men [and women] should act and represent themselves to others" (Lindsay and Miescher 2003: 4). Gender identities in this sense are culturally and historically constructed, contested, negotiated, produced and reproduced within existing power relations.

Scholars have shown how gender identities in Africa are fluid, contentious and influenced and structured by wealth, age and seniority (cf. Lindsay and Miescher 2003; Amadiume 1987; N. Achebe 2003; Cornwall 2003, 2005; Hodgson 2004; Hodgson and McCurdy 2001). These categories of difference allow us to deconstruct monolithic African gender masculinity and 'the patriarchal big man' in charge of a household, surrounded by many wives and children and commanding undeniable respect. They also challenge the stereotype of the African woman, as oppressed, powerless and under the control of the man. The images of a male breadwinner and protector are not supported by empirical studies. Women in many African societies have always been engaged in economic activities, including food production, cattle herding and trade (see Whitehead 1979; Amadiume 1987; Hutchinson 1996; Lindsay 2003; Jaji 2009). What emerges is masculinity and femininity as multiple, contested, contradictory and conflicting. Being a woman or a man of a certain age, wealth or seniority yields different status and power. Manhood and womanhood are not related to biological and physical characteristics recognised in male and female adults (McKittrick 2003) but a result of a process of 'becoming' adult achieved through the exhibition of "the approved way of being an adult male" (Gilmore 1990:1) and an adult female.

Nuer gender identities are constructed around specific responsibilities, reproductive capabilities, rights and spheres, but power dynamics between females and males fluctuate (Hutchinson 1980). As with the Masaai in Tanzania studied by Dorothy Hodsgon (2001, 2003, 2004) and the Nigerians in Ado-Odo village researched by Andrea Cornwall (1996, 2003), Nuer gender identities were fluid, multiple, intertwined with age, status and seniority (see chapter 4). I ask how they become transformed in the

process of war-induced displacement whether leading to their homogenisation or wider differentiation.

Both masculinities and femininities in Africa have been transformed through historical processes of changing social and economic landscape prior to colonial encounters, colonisation, state formation, migration and development, often resulting in a degree of levelling of hierarchies. As Jaji (2009), Dey (1981) and Carney (1988) argue, this was partially achieved through migrant wage employment in cash crop production which allowed (some) men to enter monetised economies and thus access seniority through wealth. Influenced by Christianity, colonial masculinities were reinforced by monogamous marriages with men as heads of households (Lindsay 2003). Yet, these partial and fragmented encounters with colonialism varied according to class, social and geographical location of men (and women) and as a result produced several competing hegemonic and marginalised masculinities. For the Nuer communities, the impact of the state, Christianity and change in migratory patterns undermined seniority structures based on cattle-wealth and opened up new possibilities (for some men) to re-negotiate masculinities (see Hutchinson 1996; chapter 4). By focusing on changes in gender identities, marriage process and gender division of labour due to conflict-induced displacement, I attempt to trace the historical processes of change in gender relations of the Nuer in Ler. I hope to illustrate the historicity and fluidity of women's subordination while acknowledging its resistance to change through time and place. My thesis thus contributes to the wider studies of gender in Africa.

I pay specific attention to marriage, as the core social practice of the Nuer community and a locus of gender symmetry. Marriage (and kinship) has long been recognised by anthropologists as an organising principle of productive relations and the structure of rights and obligations in non-class societies (see Collier and Rosaldo 1981). As Collier and Rosaldo point out: "In marrying, people 'make families', but they also contract debts, change residence, stir enmities, and establish cooperative bonds" (1981: 278). The organisation of marriage and relations around it help to deconstruct gender and gender-based productive relationships (see Moore 1988). Gender relations are assigned symbolic emphasis such as bridewealth in marriage. Marriage institution is a social arena in which women and men initiate personal strategies and make personal and

competing claims (Collier and Rosaldo 1981) through which cultural conceptions of gender are forged.

I adopt the definition of domestic relations within the household proposed by Whitehead (1981). She defines relations between spouses as a *conjugal contract***,** the terms on which husbands and wives exchange goods, incomes and services, including labour and those goods that they themselves have produced. This definition implies conflicts of interests between men and women. Despite the dominant symbolism and ideology, much of the feminist writing shows that the household is not a collectivity of mutually reciprocal interests. Rather, intra-relations are based on exchange and household is a production sphere for both women and men. Whitehead points out that the form of household is closely linked to the economic system in which it operates. This definition reflects power relations and economic negotiations within Nuer households. Men and women have specifically defined obligations, responsibilities and rights within the home sphere which they share in their daily interactions (chapter 4). Within the changing practice of marriage among the Nuer, I consider (re)negotiations and practice of productive relations and organisations of rights and obligations in the household and in the community. In particular, I ask how changing leadership, the emergence of autonomous women's households due to war, displacement and family separation affect the (re)negotiations of household relations. Do these changes undermine, sustain, reproduce or challenge the prevailing gender asymmetries? What are their wider implications for gender ideas, identities and institutions? Before I engage with these issues, I need to first define displacement-induced social change.

1.4. Displacement-induced change: gender and generational relations 'in-flux'

War and conflict-induced displacement and migration often produce accelerated social change (e.g., Hammond 2004a; Black 1993; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992). They also greatly impact gender asymmetrical configurations. Kandiyoti (1988) points out that 'patriarchal bargains' have normal and crisis phases. During normal phases, there might be little questioning of the asymmetrical gender relations subordinating women to men, as its gender system is depicted as 'everyday life' and legitimised through the discourse of 'our culture'. However:

> … at the point of breakdown …every order reveals its systematic contradictions. The impact of contemporary socio-economic transformations upon marriage and divorce, on household formation, and on the gendered division of labour inevitably lead to a questioning of the fundamental, implicit assumptions behind the arrangements between men and women (Kandiyoti 1988: 285-286).

The result of these crises might take a different form depending on the society. During times of dramatic social change, affirmations and/or (re)negotiations of gender relations may lead to dramatic, minimal or no changes. At times they may even reverse autonomy previously exercised by women and lead to the imposition of much stricter gender norms. For example, introduction of new modes of production and consequent migration from rural to urban areas might bring one set of shifts in gender relations (Boserup 1989). During war in Guatemala (North and Simmons 1999), former Yugoslavia (Korac 1999) and in Eritrea (Kibreab 2003), women became involved as combatants and as primary breadwinners in exile. Although this led to strengthening their economic positions in the household and in the community, these gains were often reversed at the end of the conflicts. These transformations are even more pronounced among those women and men who were resettled to western countries and were exposed to different gender ideas and economic possibilities (see McSpadden 1999, 2004: Matsuoka and Sorenson 1999; Moussa 1993). Hence, crises might either undermine or reinforce women's subordination. The local and global conditions as linked to the specific gender relations play an important role in these transformations. As Kandiyoti notes,

> Systematic analysis of women's strategies and coping mechanisms can help to capture the nature of patriarchal systems in their cultural, class-specific, and temporal concreteness and reveal how men and women resist, accommodate, adapt, and conflict with each other over resources, rights, and responsibilities. Such analysis dissolves some of the artificial divisions apparent in theoretical discussions of the relationship among class, race, gender, since participants' strategies are shaped by several levels of constraints (1988: 285).

The experiences of forcibly displaced populations offer a great deal of insights into the theoretical debates on social change and its gender repercussions. Multi-dimensional change is often provoked by specific political, social and economic conditions (Kabeer 1994; 2000; Sen 1990; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007). Social changes might either reinforce and/or re-configure gender ideology. Much of the recent gender and development literature focuses on the changed economic conditions and the entry of women into the labour market and their impact on power relations within the household

and community (Kabeer 1994, 2000; Kandiyoti 1988; Boserup 1989). While these arrangements might challenge the former terms of the 'conjugal bargain', women's access to income does not necessarily lead to greater empowerment.

However, even in dramatic circumstances, women and men retain their agency and affect the outcome of social transformations. While men have a vested interest in perpetuating the 'male breadwinner' ideal (or in the case of the Nuer, the provider of bridewealth and protector of the household) and thus maintaining gendered hegemonic hierarchies, women are not passive bystanders. They actively participate in resisting/perpetuating these arrangements. As Kandiyoti notes, "women become experts in maximising their own life chances" (1988: 280). In highly patriarchal structures women, and men, might become agents of resistance, which ultimately might lead to further subordination of women (Kandiyoti 1988; Elson et al. 1982).

To describe the points of transformation in Nuer social relations and in gender relations in particular I will employ the concept of '*being in-flux'* or '*being part and apart'*, partly adopted from the writings of Trinh Minh Ha (1989). I also use the terms of the Nuer in whose language *gɛɛr ro* means 'to change', while the transitive verb convening the meaning of action *gɛɛrɛ ro* indicates to separate, to split apart. Hence, the Nuer metaphor for change relates to "splitting away, separating oneself from the past" (Hutchinson 1996: 39). *Gɛɛrɛ ro* implies movement from one thing to another. Although some of the narratives of the displaced Nuer referred to being 'in flux' or between cultures of 'modernity' and 'their parents', the actual shaping, experiences, and practice of their (gender) identities reveal a re-working, re-shaping and development of these identities. Many men and women voiced uncertainty about both their (gender) identities as well as their belonging. Statements along the line: "*I am Nuer, but somehow I am different. War and life in Kakuma has changed me and now I feel part but also apart of the Nuer here in Ler*", was heard repeatedly from those who had spent time in Kakuma, displacement camps around Khartoum, in Ethiopia, Uganda, or had migrated to the USA or Australia.

Recognising their transformative dimension, I problematise (gender) identities as a matter of becoming, rather than being, a question of not "who we are" or "where we came from" but rather "what we might become" (Hall 1996: 4). Linking identity with

the future provides a counter-representation of identity as constantly linked to our past. Identity, says Hall, belongs to the future as much as to the past:

> Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play of history, culture and power" (quoted in Ang, 2000 p.1).

These interconnections make (gender) identities fluid and flexible rather than squarely defined by a particular place and isolated in a space. Malkki (1992) points out the transformative, relational and situational nature of identity: "Identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly self-condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories … a creaolized aggregate" (1992: 37). I will use Hall's definition of identity as "a kind of unsettled space … between a number of intersecting discourses" (1991: 10) to reflect on the dilemmas and transformations of gender ideas, identities and practice in the lives of the Nuer over time and space.

'In-flux' represents the exposure of displaced Nuer women and men to different cultures and experience of continuous journey due to displacement. It also refers to war-torn southern Sudan and the lives of its people between war and peace. Finally, it accounts for experience of transformations and rapid change in the lives of the Nuer women and men – how 'our culture' becomes infused with 'modernity'. It portrays some of the transformations in gender ideas and identities, while questioning the strict gender division of labour and gender identities. It asks how the emerging autonomy of women and girls challenges the social identity and structure of Nuer communities.

1.5. Gender and encounters with 'modernitites'

'In-flux' gender relations and displacement-induced transformations are also related to the Nuer women and men's encounters with different kinds of 'modernities' in Kakuma and in post-war southern Sudan. Conversations with men and women in Kakuma and Nuerland revolved around political and social future of Sudan, development in southern Sudan and prospects for lasting peace. Young and old, women and men alike, were concerned with rapid social changes taking place in Nuer communities as a result of

war, life in refugee camps and changing socio-economic conditions in southern Sudan. "*Cieng mi pai ben,*" (a new mode of life/custom has arrived) was a common observation of those from older generations as they witnessed changes in gender relations and livelihoods taking place in Kakuma and in Ler. Many perceived life in Kakuma as 'modern' and 'civilised' in comparison to Nuerland. This encounter with 'modernity' was of a particular kind, forged by the global humanitarianism of the United Nations and a refugee regime committed to gender equality. Experiences with the international norms, values and rights espoused by the humanitarian community in Kakuma combined with other encounters with modernity – global communications, education, gender equality programming and transnational and diasporic connections to the west. I further develop this argument in chapter 6.

In post-war southern Sudan, the encounter with 'modernity' was two-fold. On the one hand, the Nuer women and men located it in the onset of a state formation and the slow emergence of southern Sudanese autonomy, and possible independence. This was combined with the influence of global capitalism and its impact on inter- and intra-community conflicts. Global capitalism continues, as it has done for decades, to drive conflict in oil- and water-rich Sudan (see chapter 4). Globalisation and international capitalism are highly visible in post-war southern Sudan where there are numerous multi-national oil companies. Roads, administrative buildings and modern technological connections are linking hitherto unconnected places in remote areas to the global capitalist enterprise, thus forging a particular 'modernity' in Nuerland (see chapter 7).

The Nuer older women and men perceive arrival of 'modernity' in transformations reflected in new social customs, behaviours and norms. *Cieng mi pai ben* was often located in the emergence of '*wa nhiam'* (development/progress) which was arriving with education, Christianity and the infrastructure brought by oil companies and the international humanitarian community. It was also expressed in cultural norms introduced by returnees – including changing dress-codes, 'moral panic' around mini-skirts and perceptions of the place of women in the community. Many who had stayed behind were aghast at 'moral decay' and a perceived threat to 'culture'.

My explorations of changes in gender relations among the Nuer women and men in Kakuma and after return are part of the emerging 'modernities' as a result of the encounter between the agro-pastoralist Nuer communities and 'modern' global humanitarian and development enterprises. I locate this debate in the slowly growing literature on the effects of 'modernities' on gender relations in Africa, and in particular on ideals, production and practice of masculinities and femininities, marriage, gender division of labour and gender rights (see Hodgson 2001; Lindsay and Miescher 2003).

It is beyond this thesis to provide a comprehensive overview of debates around 'modernity'. The extensive literature on the topic (e.g., Berman 1982; Harvey 1987; Giddens 1990; Habermas 1987; Koselleck 1985; Latour 1987; D. Miller 1994, 1995; Pred and Watts 1992) and its multiple meanings (Ong 1999; Mills 1999; Schechter 2004) shows the elusiveness of the concept. Initially western-driven, both descriptive and prescriptive, the project of modernity emerged in the eighteenth century as a product of the European Enlightenment. Although there are multiple discourses of what modernity implies in the west there is a general agreement that it produces capitalist development, secularisation and democratic state structures.[16] More generally, modernity refers to "a particular form of political and economic organisation, particularly associated with the contemporary nation-state and industrial capitalism" (Mills 2002: 13). Hence, 'modern societies' comprise bureaucratic rationalisation, national armies and commodity markets reliant on sophisticated technologies and industrial labour. 'Modernity' has also a prescriptive meaning which defines the society and the nation's drive and development towards 'progress', 'growth' and 'advancement'. To be modern is not only to be industrialised, it is also to break from the 'past' and 'tradition', to create a "better life" – more economically productive, morally upstanding and socially rewarding (see Hodgson 2001: 3). As Felski notes: "The idea to be modern, in spite of (or perhaps because of) its polysemtic and indeterminate meanings, serves to draw our attention to long-term processes of social change, to the multidimensional yet often systemic interconnections between a variety of cultural, political and economic structures" (1995: 9). Engagement with particular

[16] Weber formulated the concept of modernity as the pervasive rationalisation of social life. Giddens developed the concept of administrative power in the modern nation-state (1987). Modernity is often assumed to refer exclusively to the west (Giddens 1991; Lash and Friedman 1992).

forms of 'modernity' in Kakuma and post-war southern Sudan allows me to analyse one of the elements of change and continuity of gender and social relations among the Nuer.

Modernity came to be associated with a mission which underpinned imperial and colonial expansion. Encounters with the agents of 'modernity' such as colonialism, missionaries, state-building and development in Africa have been widely debated. There is a growing literature on their effects on gender identities (see Lindsay and Miescher 2003; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1996; Hodgson and McCurdy 2001; Hodgson 2001; 2001; Lovett 1989; Mann 1985; Miescher 2005; Kassamali 1998; Morrell 1998, 2001; Cole, Manuh, Miescher 2006). Osella and Osella show how encounters with 'modernity' through migration impacts masculine identities and power of young men in Kerala (Osella and Osella 2000). There has been, however, much less focus on forced displacement and encounters with modernity through experiences of displacement.

As Hodgson notes, the modernity project is also paradoxical: "Despite the global hegemony of the Enlightenment version of Modernity, other powerful modes of modernity exist" (2001: 7). Through the engagement with hegemonic modernity, people across the globe produce new, alternative forms of modernity, ideas and subjectivities of being modern. Diverse sources and forms of modernity, such as Islam, socialism, to name a few, create multiple meanings and expressions of modernity (see Abu-Lughod 1998; Bernal 1997; Hodgson 2001). Number of scholars have identified more localised and context specific formulations of 'modernity' emerging across space and time which are generated by an increasing global force of political economy.[17] Hodgson notes that modernity "is always mediated by and through local cultural forms and shaped by the actions and ideas of people operating from different structural positions of power, knowledge, and identity" (2001: 7). For the purpose of analysing the particular forms of 'modernities' in Kakuma and in Nuerland and people's engagements with these processes, I use Hodgson's concept of "production of modernities" which:

[17] These studies include Chatterjee (1993), Donham (1992), Pred and Watts (1992), Miller (1994), Ong (1999), and Mills (1999).

> […] acknowledges the multiplicity of forms of modernity that emerge through the interaction of local/global processes, as well as the centrality of people's agency in creatively and actively engaging these processes to produce new and distinct ways of "being modern," within shifting structural (such as historical, political, economic, and social) constraints and opportunities (2001: 7).

In chapters 6-8, I explore how men and women, young and old, experience 'modernity' in Kakuma and in post-war Nuerland dissimilarly due to their distinctive structural positions. More importantly, through close investigation of their actions, contestations, negotiations and re-construction of gender relations in displacement and as part of emplacement, I examine how their actions and engagements with 'modernity' reshape the very meanings of what it means to be a man or a woman in their communities. Much of this re-shaping might be linked to aspirations and performance of certain concepts of modern gender identities, rather than actual practice. To capture the often contentious, conflicting and continuous subjectivities and expressions of performed or imagined 'modern' gender identities and ideologies, I use the concept of social imaginaries proposed by Charles Taylor:

> … the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings … That common understanding that makes possible common practices and widely shared sense of legitimacy … (2002:106).

The Nuer women and men, young and old's encounters with gendered 'modernities' take place against the backdrop of wars, conflicts, displacement and after-return emplacement, to which I turn next.

2. GENDERED CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND MOBILITY

2.1. Gender and migration

One of the contributions of this thesis is to fully incorporate gender as a relational category into analysis of displacement and migration processes. The dominant focus of migration research until the 1980s has been on young male migrants in search of economic opportunities in the prosperous regions of the world (Piore 1979; Portes and Bach 1985). Male bias in migration research partially resulted from emphasis on 'rational' choice in equilibrium theories. Researchers have located migration impetus in the individual rational response to scarce economic opportunities at the place of origin (push factors), compared to abandoned opportunities in the place of destination (pull

factors) (Lee 1966). The second wave of literature located migration in the relation between the global core-periphery and labour drain from poorer regions to rich capitalist centres. Neither of these flawed approaches analyse migration as an individual, family or household decision. The former underestimates the wider social structural relations in which the individual is embedded, while the latter disregards individual agency. This literature also ignored women migrants, depicting them exclusively as dependents of the male migrant (Marokvasic 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Brettell and Simon 1986).

It was not until the 1980s that female-centred migration research emerged. Phizacklea's (1983) influential edited collection *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* shed light on migrant women's participation in the western Europe labour force. It revealed the complex responsibilities of migrant women as mothers and wives, contributing to household economy through low-skill and low-paid jobs while taking on full reproductive responsibility. Marokvasic's (1984) *Birds of Passage are also Women* was a response to Piore's (1979) *Birds of Passage*. She drew attention to women as active participants of migration. These two seminal works brought to light the neglected contributions and experiences of women migrants. The bulk of research that followed endeavoured to incorporate gender into migration studies. For the most part gender has been equated with women. Notwithstanding the abundance of studies focusing on the experiences of migrant and refugee women, as opposed to men (Chant 1998; Hondagneau-Sotelo 1994; Pessar 1999; Tienda and Booth 1991; Parrenass 2008), there are still gaps in knowledge on how migrant activities are gendered and what different risks and opportunities they offer for women and men. Despite 'adding women' to the migration equation, the studies failed to account for the social relations in which men and women are embedded. The 'genderless' migrants living in a vacuum were replaced by 'free floating' migrant women. The exclusive focus on women, rather than on gender as a social and relational construct affecting lives of women and men, failed to unpack the broader dynamics and consequences of migration.

There are, however, notable exceptions to this trend (see Kibria 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Indra 1999a; Al-Ali 2002a; Hyndman and de Alwis 2003, 2008; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Abdi 2006b; Silvey 2000; Walton-Robert and Pratt 2005) that fully embrace a gender lens and consider the impact of gendered migration on embedded

patriarchal gender structures as affecting both women and men. The emerging literature on globalisation, migration and transnationalism and domestic care have provided some insightful analysis to the deeply gendered migration processes (see George 2005; Parrenass 1998, 2008). They prompt me to ask how (for the Nuer) war-induced displacement as opposed to economic migration produces different challenges to male dominant hegemonies? How are experiences of single women (and girls) in exile different from those who moved with their families or those of single men? What are the particular risks and opportunities that forced displacement creates for women and men, young and old?

2.2. Gendered conflict, violence and forced displacement

Until recently, research on war and conflict has similarly been gender-blind, not acknowledging women's participation and existence in them. As Enloe (1995) argues, armed conflicts and wars were seen as dominated and executed by men, whether as regular soldiers, guerrillas, paramilitaries or peacekeepers. When attention shifted towards the role of women and men in conflict, it focused mainly on the binary divisions between the sexes, essentialising the roles they play in armed conflict. It mostly epitomised men as warriors and women and children as victims of sexual abuse and forced abduction (Kelly 2000; Yuval-Davis 1997). Women were associated with peace (i.e. passivity) and men with war (aggression) (Moser and Clark 2001: 3). This misrepresentation, and resultant inadequate explanation of the causes, costs and consequences of armed conflicts and political violence on gender relations and the position of both women and men, has prompted some recent scholars to question the insufficient recognition of women's involvement and participation in violent conflicts and to challenge the existing representations of peaceful and victimised women and aggressive war-raging men (Lentin 1997; Jacobs *et al.* 2000; Zarkov 2008).

Recent literature on gender and conflict focuses on the experiences of refugee and internally displaced women (Korac 2004; Hyndman 2000, 2004; Martin 2004); women's testimonies of their experiences of war (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998; Turshen 2001); women's rights abuses during conflict and the role of international law (Mertus 2002; Gilad 1999); women's roles in peace processes and reconciliation (Cockburn 2001, 2004); and reconfiguration of femininities and masculinities in

conflicts due to violence and wars (Jacobs *et al.* 2000). Zarkov et al. (2008) contribution is vital in revealing intersections between development practice and violent conflict, using notions of femininity and masculinity. Although some contributions employ a gender relations approach, others limit their discussion to the impact of socio-political relations of power on specific groups, either men, women or children.

The wider forced displacement and refugee studies literature[18] also predominantly treats refugee issues from a gender-blind perspective. It puts specific emphasis on "the" refugee and "the refugee experience" (Ager 1999), with almost no consideration for the refugee as "a cultural, gendered person with his/her own particular historical, political, economic and social background"' (Willems 2003: 12). Following trends in the gender and development literature and research (GAD) in the 1990s, forced migration researchers 'added' gender but, in reality, focused selectively on issues of women, often in conjunction with children, treating them as victimised and disempowered and paying little attention to the gender dynamics of refugee experience (Martin 2004; Giles, Moussa and Van Esterik 1996a; Lentin 1997; Callamard 1999; Moser and Clark 2001). Both in popular discourses and in some academic literature, displacement and forced migration caused by conflicts are depicted through feminine categories, often referred to as *womenandchildren* (Enloe 1995). This feminisation of forced displacement, in addition to 'feminisation of poverty and of migration', have become tenet in recent decades both in popular and policy discourses (see Moghadam 1997; Zlotnik 2003; Hyndman and Giles 2004, forthcoming; Chant 2007; INSTRAW 2007). This literature draws attention to women's experiences of forced migration and exile whereby their traditional roles, identities and their position in the family, community and society at large undergo transformation. Some of these studies fall short of examining the broader parameters of gender relations of power.

The gendered experience of forced displacement, as well as the gender consequences of conflict-induced displacement, show the complexities of the general experience and outcome of this disruptive social condition (Indra 1999a; Crawley 2001; Giles and

[18] The term forced displacement refers here mainly to studies on conflict-induced displacement. A separate body of literature discusses the consequences and effects of development-induced-displacement, including gender dimensions of displacement (for example Colson 1971, 1999; Mehta 2005, 2008; Yong 2006).

Hyndman 2004; Hajdukowski et al 2008). Several studies have demonstrated how gender-power relations affect the distribution and effects of humanitarian aid (Harrell-Bond 1986; Daley 1991; Matlou 1999) and the assignment of political status (Gilad 1999; Giles 1999; Macklin 1999). Other important studies have shown how the impact and meaning of forced relocation can be highly gender-differentiated (Moussa 1993; Moussa and McSpadden 1996; Indra 1999a; Matsouka and Sorenson 1999; Giles and Hyndman 2004) and result in significant renegotiation of gender roles (Daley 1991; Camino and Krufeld 1994; McSpadden 1999; Abdi 2006a; Szczepanikova 2005; Hajdukowski et al. 2008). These accounts add important dimensions to the debate and knowledge of the place and role of women and men in conflicts and violence. My aim is to extend debates on the impact of refugee encampment on gender identities by widening the focus on gender (and on age) beyond women, which has been covered extensively in the literature. I do so by including debates both on masculinities (often overlooked in the refugee literature, with a few notable exceptions see Turner 1999, 2000, 2001; Brun 2000; Schechter 2004; Hart 2008), and the (hitherto completely neglected) experiences of young refugee girls.[19]

The thesis takes an encompassing view of the transformative power of war-time migration and displacement on gender relations with general changes of the social fabric. As Turshen and Tawiramariya show (1998), forced migration may lead to destruction of male-dominated structures of society, and that despite its devastating consequences on individuals, families and societies, forced displacement can open up opportunities for creating new forms of gender relations and social norms. As demonstrated by research among refugee women and men in Africa (Matlou 1999; Turshen 2001); Latin America (Ibanez 2001; Meertens 2001; Crosby 2004) and in urban centres of the south (Kibreab 1995, 1999; Fábos 1999, 2008; Lejukoje 2000; Willems 2003), changes in division of labour in exile and women's contribution to the household economy gives them greater decision-making and social power. To what extend are these processes truly transformative of the male dominant hegemonies? How can we distinguish changes in gender relations due to displacement from broader social change due to economic, political and social processes?

[19] A few studies focus on the experience of the female and male youth in conflicts (Utas 2003, 2005a; Vigh 2006, 2007; Christiansen et al 2005; Boyden and de Berry 2004).

Despite calls to integrate gender in forced displacement studies, research on women has continued to dominate the field. But how is the conflict-induced mobility (of agro-pastoralist Nuer) gendered and experienced differently by women and men, young and old? How are the diverse women and men's and inter-generational experiences during war, in displacement and of emplacement after return affecting relations of power? My attempt to develop an analytical framework situated in gender as a relational and inter-generational construct affecting both women and men adds to the wider studies of gendered and generational processes of forced displacement.

3. RETURN, EMPLACEMENT AND GENDER

3.1. Situating 'return' and correcting 'sedentarist' bias

The context for analysing the transformations of Nuer gender relations is what the literature calls return and repatriation of displaced populations. In recent years this has grown significantly in response to the changing international policy and practice towards 'the refugee problem'. As Black and Koser argue, "one of the effects of the increased and accelerated rates of repatriation during this decade (1990s) has been to lend weight and popular legitimacy to a discourse that has come to dominate refugee policy, namely that repatriation is the optimum and most feasible 'durable solution' to the refugee crisis" (1999: 3). Although gaps in knowledge on return are slowly being addressed, few scholars take a critical stand on the concepts themselves.

I drew on forced migration literature to contextualise my empirical findings with regards to processes of return and, meanings of home. Since refugee issues are highly 'political' most of the literature tends to address the policy implications of return and home (e.g. Harrell-Bond 1989; Rogge 1994; Allen and Morsnik 1994; Allen and Turton 1996; Long and Oxfeld 2004). Some studies offered insights into diverse concepts of 'home' in the context of refugee 'return' and problematise its diverse contextual meanings (Black and Koser 1999). Others have contested the policy-makers' strong assumption that most refugees will go home once the conditions in their country of origin allow for return in safety and dignity. They stress that the decision is linked to the conditions in the country of asylum and situation in the place of origin (for example Harrell-Bond 1989; Bascom 1999; Kibreab 1999, 2000, 2002).

Another set of literature dealing with ideas of home as mobile, deterritorialised and fluid were useful in making sense of the constant place- and homemaking projects that the Nuer refugee and returnee women and men were engaged in. In particular, the critique of notions of place, home and nativeness is relevant for forced migration as being part of globalisation processes and transnational mobility. Appadurai (1988, 1990), Said (1979, 1986), Clifford (1988), Rosaldo (1989), Hannerz (1987), Hebdige (1987), Robertson (1988), Gupta and Ferguson (1997a, 1997b) and others have recently suggested that notions of nativeness and native places become very complex as more and more people identify themselves, or are categorised, in reference to deterritorialised 'homelands', 'cultures' and 'origin'. These insights allow me to deconstruct the notion of 'home' as remembered, narrated and (re)constructed by Nuer refugee, returnee and stayee women and men. In her study of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Malkki emphasises that "in the context of increased displacement and mobility of people, there is an increase in invention of homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases - through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit" (1992: 24). However, the argument of constant mobility offers little explanation of the reasons for mobility, which in the case of forced displacement are often linked to gross violations of human rights, violence and dispossession. It tends to be rather neutral and non-normative by ignoring the suffering, lack of protection and the sense of loss that is often involved in (forced) mobility.

I borrow some of the insights emenating from these diverse debates in order to unpack the different accounts of home and return. I analyse the gendered processes of displacement and emplacement in terms of women and men's "own systems of meaning and experiences and to discern the particular human consequences of these larger forces in everyday lives and actions" (Long and Oxfeld 2004: 3). In this way, I attempt to correct the sedentarist (and gender-blind) bias dominant in displacement and return policy and literature.

The underlying assumption of 'displacement' is based on sedentarist ideas of society. In her influential critique of humanitarian discourse, Liisa Malkki links the portrayal of refugees as 'displaced people' to the loss of their sedentarist roots. She describes

refugees as "exemplary victims": "*stripped of their specificity of culture, place, and history* – (and thus as) human in the most basic, elementary sense. The refugee as bare humanity stands, we imagine, for all of us at our most naked and basic level" (1995a: 12). Any degree of agency or self-sufficiency revealed by refugees undermines refugees' claim to their 'refugeeness' and its authenticity (Malkki 1997). Such depictions are based on deep assumptions about relations between culture, place and nation. Malkki explains that this regime of order, "the national order of things" (1992, 1995a), associates movement with loss of culture, identity and agency:

> If territorially "uprooted people" are so easily seen as "torn loose from their culture" (Marrus 1985: 8), as I have argued elsewhere (1992), this is only because culture is itself a profoundly territorialized (and even a quasi-ecological) concept in so many settings…. Violated, broken roots signal an ailing cultural identity and a damaged nationality… Insofar as "culture can also function like a nature" (Balibar 19991: 22) that fixes in native places and points of origin, uprootendess becomes profoundly unnatural and perhaps the ultimate human tragedy (1995b: 15-16).

Such portrayal of 'displaced' people is not only generalised to all refugees but also to residents of war-zones, including those internally dispersed (see Lubkemann 2008: 7). What is important for my analysis of wartime migration and displacement is the sedentarist bias linking people's life projects and daily social relations to the social and material resources of a specific place. Hammond (2004a) argues that such biases imply that wartime migration and displacement result in leaving the place, and hence in the loss of the necessary resources. She does not invalidate the traumatic effects that such movement might have, or that people might have idealised sentiments of 'home' and their ultimate goal might be to return there (see Markowitz and Stefansson 2004). Rather, Hammond questions the generalisable and predictable role that a place might have in community and identity construction (2004a: 79).

Consequently, such sedentarist biases do not reflect the lives of agro-pastoralist and nomadic populations, including the Nuer. Nuer social identities and livelihoods are mobile, intrinsically linked to cattle (and later labour) migration (chapters 4 and 5). To correct the sedentarist bias in forced displacement studies, I link post-modern conceptualisation of home and space to the notions of place-making developed in studies which have situated forced migration and displacement in the wider context of migration as people's livelihood strategies (Hammond 1999, 2004a; Bakewell 2000; Lubkemman 2002, 2004; Rodgers 2002; Turton 2005).

This is relevant to my analysis in several ways. Many southern Sudanese have been repeatedly displaced in the last half-century by wars and famines.[20] What does the term 'returnee' imply for them? How long does one need to be in a place to stop being a 'returnee'? For many displaced Nuer return to their villages was not necessarily the end of 'migration', but one of a number of movements. As predominantly rural agro-pastoralists the Nuer are highly mobile. Seasonal and recurring migrations with their cattle have been coupled with migration for work and trade as livelihood portfolios have changed in the last 80 years (see Hutchinson 1996). Even those Nuer who have migrated to towns still retain strong connections to their villages, maintaining several 'homes' in multiple locations. Current returns of refugees and internally displaced Nuer are not an end to the migratory journey, as 'returnees' maintain strong links to their places of displacement in case of renewed conflict. This is also the reason why I have chosen to present the story of Nuer displacement and emplacement through their seasonal migration strategies. Each empirical chapter corresponds to a season as a metaphor of different phase of displacement and emplacement.

Wartime migration, although undertaken amidst extreme insecurity, is often referred to by the Nuer as 'movement'. "*We went [cako wa] to Ethiopia, Khartoum, Kenya*" were phrases that the Nuer used to describe their wartime mobility. Although the narratives of *cieng* (village/community) were pervasive among the Nuer refugees in Kenya who expressed their sentiments and longing for *cieng nuära* (Nuer 'culture'/community/village), the connection to one specific place was less obvious. Can we then theorise the experience of 'return' for the Nuer as another step in their migratory journey through life? I adopt a concept of displacement as a process, rather than an outcome, a continuum of place-making or emplacement.

The concept of continuum of displacement and emplacement as a lifestyle is linked to the concept of migration used by Oliver Bakewell (2000) in his account of Angolan refugees in Zambia and their attitudes towards repatriation. Some Angolan refugees integrated in the border villages of Zambia are described as having "one foot in Zambia and the other in Angola" and "their weight shifts from foot to foot all the time"

[20] According to the US Committee for Refugees in 1999 an estimated 80 percent of southern Sudan's five million people had been displaced at least once during the preceding 15 years of war.

(Bakewell 2000: 366). Hence, there is no clearly defined time when they have finished their migration. Bakewell describes it as "a process with no clear beginning nor end, rather than an event" (2000: 366). The study of cross border movement as migration shows how the process needs to be understood within the wider historical and socio-economic context of the area, rather than as a special refugee phenomenon (Bakewell 2000: 371). A similar argument of emplacement is presented by Hammond (2004a) in her study of Tigrayan refugees for whom repatriation to Ethiopia was an opportunity to establish their livelihoods, rather than resumption of an old way of life. The critique provided by Dolan (1999) of the UNHCR-sponsored programme for Mozambican refugees in South Africa points out how simplistic assumptions behind repatriation neglect socio-economic and political factors involved in individuals' migration decision. Hence, seeing return as part of displacement continuum might allow us to explore the reasons why people might want, or might not want, to return to places of origin.

3.2. Gendered emplacement

For the purpose of my analysis, I follow the definition of return and repatriation proposed by Hammond (2004a) which accommodates the continuum of movement and displacement. Hammond defines return as:

> varying both qualitatively and in terms of its duration, and it should be understood as a process by which a returnee establishes the social, political, and economic ties that define him/her in a meaningful way as a member of a community whose primary ties are to the country or region [but not necessarily the village or city] of origin, rather than to the location of exile (2004a: 73).

Returnees are very much aware of the fact that going to the country of origin does not imply re-integration and re-construction (Hammond 1999, 2004a). Turton (2005) argues that place-making is closely intertwined with person's social and individual identity and constitutes not only a stage for social activity but is a 'product' of it. This definition closely reflects the Nuer conceptions of return. According to Nuer women and men, it is a process of settling in and becoming part of a community, described as *nyiuuri piny*, literally 'sitting on the ground/land'. What are the different gendered strategies employed by the Nuer in achieving *nyiuuri piny*?

Emplacement (settling in) in Ler was performed through a myriad of activities such as accessing land, building a house, farming, finding a 'job', cooking, reconnecting with and visiting friends and relatives and taking part in community events. In addition, emplacement was linked to the practice, negotiation and (re)production of gender relations, including starting a marriage process. It also entailed being and becoming (again) a Nuer, a congruent identity that linked the personal experiences of 'place' and *cieng* (community/home) to wider social and communal obligations, rights and networks of mutual support. Akin to the emplacement process studied by Laura Hammond among the Ethiopian returnees in Ada Bai (2004a), emplacement of the Nuer involved both material and moral aspects of practice (Migdal 1988). For the Nuer, it was often a dialectic between gendered practices and representations by returnees and those who had stayed behind that were turning an unfamiliar or changed place into a familiar safe 'home'. These places were, however, both experienced and emplaced differently by old and young, women and men.

I build my definition of emplacement around the concept of Appadurai's (1996) "locality production"[21] and extend it to include the re-negotiation and creation of a new set of social norms, including gender relations, which so far has been rarely addressed by those focusing on return of refugees (with the exception of Kibreab 2001, 2003; North and Simmons 1999a). More importantly, place and space are not only linked to the locality but also take a territorial dimension, and are connected to a particular political territory and sovereignty. Hence, localities and territory determine what types of rights are offered for different groups (refugees, returnees, displaced, citizens). The role of the state becomes important in providing and guaranteeing rights. For dispossessed refugees in Kenya and those returning to their country of origin, access to rights determines in part the shape of gender relations.

Return or movement to a new place is rarely to an empty space, uninhabited by others. The complexities of return and relations with those who stayed behind are slowly being addressed (Bascom 1999, 2005; Steputtat 1999, 2001; Bakewell 2000; Kibreab 2003; Lubkemann 2004, 2005, 2008; Phelan and Wood 2006). This thesis pushes the

[21] Appadurai defines locality as a "phenomenological quality", or "dimension" of social life, to be distinguished from "neighbourhood" which he defines as an "actually existing" social form in which locality is "realised" (1996: 178-179).

boundaries of current thinking on return by analysing the processes of emplacement in the context of relations between returnees and stayees through a gender relations lens.[22] It challenges the view of the household as an undifferentiated black box, a misconception borrowed from the gender and development literature (see Whitehead 1979; A. Sen 1990; Kandiyoti 1988; Kabeer 1994, 2000). Rather, it unpacks the different gendered notions of home and return, gender differentiation with regards to the decision to return and the gendered dynamics of the (re)construction of social relations for both those moving and for those who stayed behind.

I have presented here the analytical and theoretical framework of gender relations, modernities, displacement and emplacement that serves to understand the gendered lives and transformations of age-infused gender relations among the Nuer in their journeys through war, displacement and emplacement after 'return' to Sudan. Through the empirical discussions in chapters 5-8, I attempt to show how these experiences challenged, led to (re)negotiation and (re)construction of gender relations and impacted gender asymmetries. The next chapter presents research strategies and fieldwork design that enabled me to gather empirical data.

[22] A few studies on return consider gender analysis; exceptions include Steputtat 1999; Kibreab 2003; Lubkemann 2008; North and Simmons 1999a.

CHAPTER 3
FIELDWORK 'AFTER-FIRE'

1. THE BEGINNING

On July 17, 2006, I landed at Nairobi's Kenyatta International Airport and prepared my visa documents. Waiting in a long queue of khaki-clad tourists ready for their safari 'adventure' in the Masaai Mara plains, I felt rather out of place. Greeting me in a British accent the immigration officer asked if I was coming to see animals. "*No*", I replied, somewhat perplexed. "*I am a student and will be doing research in the refugee camp in Kakuma. Later, I will follow Sudanese refugees returning to southern Sudan and will do my research there*." "*Oh, so you are with the UN, the humanitarian business, right? You are coming to see the refugees*." Suddenly, I became a 'refugee' tourist – rather than somebody 'on safari' – clearly two known categories of visitors in a country with many animals and refugees.

Five months later, on a flight to the southern Sudanese capital Juba, I found myself one of the few female passengers. The rest were men, representing different aspects of the humanitarian post-war world: South African de-miners, UN peacekeepers, representatives of donor and aid agencies and southern Sudanese politicians. Again, immigration officials could not understand the purpose of my visit, and quickly categorised me as a humanitarian worker. These assumptions both in Kenya and in southern Sudan were to dog me throughout my fieldwork.

'The fieldwork' and 'the field' have received academic attention and its conflicting nature have been discussed on numerous occasions (for example Asad 1973; Clifford 1990, 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Geertz 1988; Wolf 1996; Scheyvens and Storey 2003). Both Kakuma and southern Sudan challenge the notion of 'the field' as unitary and complete (Gupta and Fergusson 1997). They are complex due to the interaction of many 'worlds' – the tourist, humanitarian and oil industries, the 'host' and the 'refugee' communities in Kakuma, and 'the stayee' and 'returnee' worlds in Sudan. The idiosyncrasies of the 'field' became clear to me on my first day in the region. In this chapter, I reflect on the methodological choices, practicalities, experiences and

challenges of conducting fieldwork in 'the humanitarian world' of the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and in Ler, a market town in the Western Upper Nile state of southern Sudan, a post-war place of return of displaced populations and of 'development (re)construction'.

The title of the chapter refers to a book *Fieldwork Under Fire* (Nordstrom and Robben 1995) which discusses ethnographic fieldwork in the context of war and violence. My 'after fire' fieldwork was carried out in the wake of decades of conflict in southern Sudan. In this chapter I focus on the challenges of ethnographic research amidst insecurity, post-war and inter-war uncertainties, donor, UN and NGO politics, NGOs, aid programmes and the oil industry. I consider how research among refugees and in 'after fire' settings can be rigorous and ethical.

2. A FEMINIST ACROSS PLACE AND SPACE: FOLLOWING PEOPLE, FOLLOWING STORIES

My study is situated in feminist anthropology which emphasises difference as its starting point (see H. Moore 1988, 1994; Strathern 1972, 1987, 1988; Haraway 1985) and the study of gender in its social, political, economic and cultural construction and practice (Ortner 1974; Whitehead 1979; H. Moore 1988, 1994; Kandiyoti 1988, 1998; Cowan 1990). My understanding of feminism is closely linked with bell hooks' interpretation, who asserted "[t]o me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination … " (hooks 1981: 194, cited in Collins 1990: 38). This commitment to a transformative feminist politics (see Patai 1991) shaped my approach to the formulation of the research questions, research focus, fieldwork, data analysis and writing-up. It also resulted in some of the ethical, personal, academic and political "feminist dilemmas in fieldwork" revolving around power and the position of the researcher described by Diane Wolf (1996) and Sondra Hale (1991).

Following Harding's (1987) argument that there is no single feminist method, and recognising that there are multiple feminist epistemologies and feminist projects (Wolf 1996: 6; Mohanty 1987, 1991; Stacey 1991), my research approach was based on a general concern to examine women and men's interests and experiences of displacement and emplacement and a striving towards "a science that minimizes harm

and control of the research process" (Devault 1999: 30-31). Although most feminist research focuses on women and women's worlds, my interest was to uncover changes in gender relations resulting from conflict-induced displacement. It hence required understanding structures of relations of subordination and the role that both women and men play in these structures of gender power. I chose a feminist methodology[23] also because it questions positivist value-free methodologies and seeks alternative epistemological and methodological paradigms to better explain the often-invisible power relations embedded in gender. Feminist methodologies appealed to me because of their central commitment to reflexivity and making biases and stands on issues visible and explicit (Collins 1990; Devault 1999; Harding 1987; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Wolf 1996). In this way, I was able to bring my own preconceptions and interpretations to the subject under study, resulting in the production of "partial truths" rather than one overarching hegemonic interpretation (Wolf 1996; Stanley et Wise 1993; Stanley 1990; Mohanty 1987, 1991). Feminist methodologies reject strict measurements favoured by quantitative researchers. The ethnographic qualitative and reflexive research is based on different criteria. They include convincing arguments for the research design, the rigour and quality of methods employed, and discussion of weaknesses and strengths of the data collected and methods used (Silverman 2005; Denzin and Lincoln 2003).

Studying processes of transformations in gender relations resulting from conflict-induced displacement, and comparing these changes over time, required familiarity with, and being embedded in, different settings of displacement, including refugee camps and the site of return. Here I agree with Carolyn Nordstrom's questioning of the boundaries of ethnography "when borders cannot contain the stories of those living in both zones of war and peace" (Nordstrom 2004). I decided to follow the people and their stories which required resorting to a multi-sited ethnography as the conceptual and methodological point of departure (Marcus 1995).

After an initial two-week pilot trip to the region in May 2006, my fieldwork started in Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya where between August and December 2006 I

[23] Feminist methodology defines research as "contextual, inclusive, experimental, involved, socially relevant, …. complete but not necessarily replicable, inclusive of emotions and events as experienced" (Nielson 1999: 6 as cited in Wolf 1996: 4).

observed, studied and participated in the lives of Sudanese refugees. I then followed some Sudanese Nuer refugees on their return to southern Sudan, specifically to Ler, a small market centre in the middle of Western Upper Nile an oil rich area, bordering northern Sudan. Historically, the region has often been referred to as Nuerland. I stayed in Ler between January and September 2007 observing and studying the settling-in process of returnees who had been displaced to Kenya and Khartoum. I also carried out some field visits to other places in southern Sudan, including the capital of the Unity state where I was based, twin-town of Bentiu and Rubkona, Juba, and other towns and villages. At the end of my stay in Sudan, I went back to Kakuma both to gather additional data on the situation in the camp, but also to pass on messages from relatives in Sudan and share information on the situation in Sudan. I thus completed a full circle, starting research in Kakuma and returning there after 13 months.

In brief, I was pursuing an *ethnography of displacement and emplacement*[24] through which I attempted to identify processes of change and transformation in Nuer society with regard to gender relations. The ethnography itself followed the trajectory of displaced lives and experiences as people move from one location to another and (re)build their lives and social norms. Hence, the research 'field' is conceptualised as more than a geographical space but rather follows the suggestion of Gupta and Ferguson (1997) of "attentiveness to social, cultural, and political *location.*" My intention was to privilege the situation of return because we know much less about the gender relations of returnees in the context of emplacement after 'return'. This approach allowed me to examine the cultural, economic, social and political specificities of each setting and how this influenced construction and reconstruction of a particular set of gender relations, meanings and identities across time and space.

In my research and in writing-up I wanted to study the social world in its natural state with respect and appreciation and to stay as close as possible to the local meanings and voices of those who participated in the study (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994: 6; Cole and Knowles 2001). I followed Strathern's observation that "it is only by entering a realm of meaning" generated in particular social or cultural setting "that we can make it properly meaningful for ourselves" (1979b cited in Tonkin 1984).

[24] See Hammond's study (2005) on the return and emplacement of Ethiopian refugees. Due to lack of access, she only followed the lives of returnees in Ethiopia.

Ethnography is not problem-free. While feminist researchers have attempted to minimise power differentials between the researcher and the researched (Wolf 1996; Patai 1991; Minh-ha 1989; Collins 1991), the result has been rather unsatisfactory (Wolf 1996). I also experienced this frustration throughout fieldwork and writing-up. Partly, this has to do with the nature of fieldwork and the process of knowledge production in general. For by maintaining control and distance even feminist researchers end up "benefiting the researcher more than those studied and furthering the gap between the researcher and the researched" (Wolf 1996: 3). The longer I took writing my thesis, the more distant I became from the voices and experiences of those who had participated in the research. Academic rigour made it often impossible to stick to my intended principles. Furthermore, the research process is marked by the unequal positions of researcher and her subjects. Although immersion through fieldwork might bring the researcher closer to research participants, it does not eliminate the inequality of the researcher's positionality expressed through the ability to leave 'the field' at the end of the research (ibid: 10).

While acknowledging that both the research process and writing are highly interpretative, I chose to stay close to the voices of research participants, by 'speaking nearby or together with'. By recognising my own position in the fieldwork and writing-up, I attempt to avoid the pitfalls of what Trinh Minh-ha (1989) refers to as "speaking for and about" which too often results in the process of differentiation between the 'all knowledgeable' researcher and the 'powerless' researched. Through employing reflexive ethnography throughout my research and writing-up (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Aull Davis 1999) as a researcher who influences the shape of the final product (in this case a DPhil thesis) I need to acknowledge my own self in all stages of knowledge production. My aim is, however, not to let the 'reflexive self' detract from the experiences of the participants in the study (Aull Davis 1999: 15), whose stories and lives remain the main source of 'data' on which this thesis is based.

3. FIELDWORK DESIGN, ACCESS AND POSITIONALITY

3.1. 'In-flux' planning

As most of the research design literature argues, securing access and pre-planning are important pre-fieldwork stages (see Punch 2005; Goffman 2002). As the study

proposed to examine social relations, experiences of conflict, displacement and return and changes over time, a tight *a priori* research framework was impossible. Instead, the research followed a flexible, inductive and predominantly qualitative methodology in which focus and structure developed as the study progressed. The research therefore required a framework that encompassed its ethnographic, spatial/multi-sited and historical/comparative elements. As the situation in southern Sudan remained uncertain – with many practical obstacles to gaining access to certain areas (including lack of transport infrastructure and general impoverishment and destruction as a result of prolonged conflict) – the framework for the research had to be flexible. Studying highly mobile refugee populations cannot be fully pre-planned, as "these environments are typically defined by social chaos and subversive economies where affected populations experience a profound sense of confusion and disorientation" (Rodgers 2004).

The concept of 'in-flux', which I use as a metaphor to portray the process of displacement and accompanying transformations in social relations, is also very relevant to my own research experience and my life between the different worlds of Kakuma and post-war southern Sudan. Doing anthropological ethnographic research to illuminate that "which is rendered non-visible for reasons of power" (Nordstrom 2004: 15) and, in my case, to shed light on the often-invisible transformations of gender ideology, power and practice, was a challenging endeavour. A particular problem from the onset of my research was the difficulty of conceptualising 'change' or *gɛɛr ro* (see chapter 2) and making it methodologically meaningful in the contexts of the disjunctions and ruptures due to conflict, displacement and emplacement after return. I also was faced with difficulties in distinguishing between general social change and that due to displacement and conflict. This was especially difficult given my core interest in often-invisible negotiations and practices of gender relations. The process and causality of transformation in gender relations were what interested me.[25] I decided that I could only start to understand some of the transformations while being embedded in two places: a place of 'displacement' and a place of 'emplacement' after return.

[25] See other studies of change in gender relations by Elson 1991; Kibria 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Hutchinson 1996; Indra 1999; Abdi 2006; Kibreab 2003; Jok and Hutchinson 2001; Schechter 2004; Guarnizo and Smith 2003.

My choice to study the Nuer was coincidental. Before embarking on my fieldwork I was not sure which ethnic groups of southern Sudanese refugees I would be able to access in Kakuma and later in Sudan. Since my objective was to follow refugees returning from Kakuma to Sudan, this required identification at the beginning of my fieldwork of a group to focus on.[26] On my first day in the camp, I attended an NGO-convened workshop on gender and human rights for prospective Nuer returnees. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was returning refugees by air. Hence, I decided to focus on the Nuer, and in particular the western Nuer, the second largest ethnic group in southern Sudan and also in the Kakuma camp.

3.2. Access and positionality: divided and fragmented

Access to the field is not only a logistical issue but part of the knowledge production process. Research as an interactive process of exchange, conversation, often reciprocity and knowledge production is shaped by the researcher's "personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 9) as well as age and social status. Here, I reflect on the challenges of gaining access in the highly politicised and fragmented space of refugee camps and 'after-fire' southern Sudan.

An important aspect that influenced access was my own positionality as researcher which is often presented as the 'insider/outsider' dilemma (Wolf 1996; Lal 1996; Patai 1991; Abu-Lughod 1988; Lammers 2007). By explaining one's positionality, we should not try to only put "badges", as Patai warns us (1991), as excuses but rather fully engage in the power differentials that persist between the fieldworker and research participants. Before embarking on the fieldwork research, I was conscious that my position in the research process and writing, as a young white female European exemplified for many southern Sudanese the world of humanitarian assistance and thus might obscure my understanding of the nuanced local relations. However, positionalities as knowledges are both multiple and mobile, relational and context specific. As I moved from one setting to another, although my core as a white woman remained static, these axes of difference (gender, age, race and social status) were

[26] My aim was to get in-depth knowledge and understanding of gender relations of southern Sudanese which required being embedded in the community for an extended period of time. As there are over 250 ethnic groups in Sudan and due to time restrictions, I decided to follow only one group.

reinterpreted depending on the context and environment. Manoeuvring between these positions, I resorted to a number of ways to minimise the power discrepancies between myself and those whose lives I was interested to study.

Negotiating the refugee 'industry' in Kakuma

My access to the refugee camp in Kakuma had to be negotiated through the different institutions controlling the camp: the Kenyan government, UNHCR, the numerous NGOs in charge of the management of the camp and the refugee camp administration. Before my pilot trip to the region I contacted the UNHCR sub-office in Kakuma in order to gain permission to visit the camp. My personal connections, through my husband who was working for UNHCR in southern Sudan, helped establish initial contact. However, the head of UNHCR's sub-office in Kakuma denied my request arguing that there had been multiple studies carried out in the camp and that there was no more need for research. Instead, I secured research permits from the Kenyan Ministry of Education who did not express any reservations regarding my request and hence I was able to visit Kakuma. The politics around research permits and access to refugee camps highlighted the uneasy balance of power between the government of Kenya and the international organisations mandated to assist refugees (see chapter 6). While the UNHCR was officially mandated with the administration of the camp and the camp was based on the Kenyan territory and thus officially under the governance of the Kenyan government. It seemed to me that by denying me access to the camp the UNHCR head of sub-office wanted to show me power and ability to control the camp. The decision of the government official, on the other hand, might have been taken either to demonstrate that the real control over the Kenyan territory was in the hands of the Kenyan authorities.

During the pilot visit, I secured research permits from the UNHCR office in Nairobi and from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the agency in charge of Kakuma camp management. Similarly to Vogler's (2007) study in Thai refugee camps and Mulumba's (2007) research in Ugandan camps, I faced obstacles accessing the research site as a result of barriers imposed by the government, UNHCR and aid agencies.[27] My

[27] See Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007 for discussion on gatekeepers in refugee research.

position as a young white European woman doing research among refugees was questioned by all and I often had to explain my presence and the objectives of my research. The camp has been a focus of numerous studies and researchers coming for variety of reasons. It also hosts many international and Kenyan NGOs and missionary groups which complicate establishing one's position. In this highly politicised and internationalised environment showing signs of 'research fatigue',[28] it was crucial to establish my credibility. I often had to manoeuvre between the different worlds of the aid workers, missionaries, the local population and the refugees. I was also in the middle of the institutional power politics in the camp (see chapter 6), often feeling isolated, lonely and depressed after having witnessed horrifying living conditions, violence and abuse of rights.

In order to disassociate myself from the aid industry's highly politicised tensions and acquire a better understanding of refugees' lives, I turned down accommodation offers from UNHCR and some NGOs, instead staying at a local guesthouse[29] on the outskirts of Kakuma town, at the opposite end from the refugee camp. Staying there gave me an opportunity to learn more about the local host population, the Turkanas, and the impact of the refugee presence on their lives.[30] Other examples of my manouevering included maitining good relations through socialising with and seeking input from the NGO workers yet maintaining physical distance from the NGO compound by spending most of the time in refugee houses. Although I participated in several meetings and visits to the camp organised by NGO employees, I usually tried to re-visit refugee communities by myself in order to distance myself from the NGO activities and explain the purpose of my presence in the camp. I also tried to attend activities organised by NGOs and the UNHCR by going with refugee research participants rather than humanitarian workers.

Despite my attempts to distance myself from international humanitarians, many refugees had high expectations of being rewarded for sharing information with me. My

[28] Many refugees complained about the number of researchers, NGO and UN workers coming to gather information and never sharing their findings.
[29] UNHCR and LWF cited "high insecurity in the camp" as grounds for rejecting my request to live in the camp.
[30] The focus of the aid organisations and researchers on refugees, with almost complete neglect of the situation of the local population despite the fact they are among the most impoverished and marginalised groups in Kenya, made me question my own moral stand. By living in the guesthouse I was at least able to interact with local population.

Nuer research assistant in Kakuma, a young man, Thok explained to me: "*They see you as a white person who is here to help others. That's why they are also very interested in talking to you because they think you came with a mission to help.*" My gender, race, social status, class and age were all determinants of how I was perceived by refugees and at the same time influenced the type of information that was being shared with me. Most respondents' expectations focused on possibilities of resettlement in the west or educational support. Since some refugees saw me in the camp with NGO gender workers, they assumed that I was working for the well-known gender-equality programme (see chapter 6). Some women started their stories with complaints about domestic violence and abuse committed by their husbands and male relatives, hoping that this would enhance prospects of resettlement to western countries. I continuously explained my position and research interests to research participants and minimised contacts with the humanitarian workers in order to reinforce my credibility.

Beyond *Nyakhaway*, towards *NyaPiliny*: experience in southern Sudan

Southern Sudan proved to be as divided.[31] With a large contingent of foreign, mostly European and American, humanitarian and development workers based in southern Sudan, as a white woman I was initially perceived as part of the humanitarian enterprise. This was understandable given my dependence on securing access to my research site from international organisations with resources and infrastructure. I needed to rely on the World Food Program (WFP) to board the only aircraft regularly flying to remote areas in southern Sudan.[32] I occasionally used the facilities of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Ler, one of the few NGOs present in the area, in order to check my email, type notes, get a ride to town, participate in some of their community training workshops and share a meal. I often had to manoeuvre between

[31] As a result of the civil war, Sudan is going through a political transformation, with possible separation and independence of the south to be decided in a referendum scheduled for 2011. Consequently, there are competing administrative arrangements in the south. Officially the south is still considered a part of Sudan and the Khartoum government requires all travellers to secure Sudanese visas. Meanwhile, the southern regional government in Juba issues its own travel documents. Hence, I secured a visa from the Sudanese embassy in Kenya and a travel permit from the southern Sudanese representation in Nairobi. I also received a support letter for my research from the minister of the President's Office of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS). I cleared my research with the administrative offices of the Southern Sudanese Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Commission (SSRRC) in Bentiu and in Ler upon my arrival in Western Upper Nile.

[32] On arrival in Rubkona/Bentiu, the capital of the Unity state where Ler is located given lack of tourist infrastructure I was initially hosted by the local office of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

being perceived as an 'aid worker', missionary, a politician bearing aid and a neighbour. Frequently, I was the only woman around, often having to put up with the company of South African de-miners, Indian peace-keepers, European and American aid workers, drunk Sudanese soldiers (often too small to carry their heavy guns) or self-important male government officials. Interactions with those in power made my 'field' and the experience of the 'field' extremely gendered (Wolf 1996: 23). In order to get away from the 'humanitarian industry' and get closer to the local stayee and returnee everyday life, I decided to live in the community and restrict interactions with the international aid crowd to necessary security and logistical arrangements.[33]

My concern was how to get beyond the label of *nyakhaway* (from Arabic - the daughter of a foreigner or a white man) or *nyabor* (in Nuer - the daughter of a white man), terms I was at first referred to by the local population. I decided that the only way to arrive at some understanding of community life and the experiences of return and settling-in of refugees was to follow some of the families from the refugee camp in Kenya on their journey back to Sudan and to live among the population. In Ler, I stayed with one of the families whom I befriended through my connections from Kakuma and built a small *duel* (a mud and grass hut) on their land. I lived with a wife of a young man and their four children. Her husband, Gatchang, lived with his second wife in Rubkona, about a four-hour drive from the market centre where I settled. As I started building my house and learning the Nuer language, I quickly became known as *ciek Gatchang* – the wife/woman of my host. Even Nyakuma, my hostess, referred to me as her 'co-wife', *nyakhda* (the daughter of jealousy).

[33] Due to the volatile security situation in the region and the lack of access to possible evacuation measures, I reached an agreement with OCHA and IRC on personal emergency procedures. Also, IDS generously sent me a satellite phone.

Figure 1: My home in Ler.

I often heard expressions of surprise from my Nuer neighbours, at times appreciative, that I was willing to live among the local community. Jany, a young man who had spent most of his life in Khartoum, Kakuma and in Nairobi and had returned to Sudan in his late twenties, asked me when he visited my humble house in Ler:

> NyaPiliny, why are you living this way? Isn't this hard for you, the white people? You come from a very different world, you are not used to this hard life here. Even for us, the returnees, it is difficult to live the life of the people in the village. Why are you doing this? Couldn't you do the research in town?

Being part of the community through living and sharing space and life with the people from the village gave me an opportunity to experience many of the gender practices and negotiations in Nuer daily life. At the same time, by being in many ways a *jääl*[34] like the returnees, I was faced with some of the challenges faced by returnees in

[34] In Nuer *jääl* means traveller, guest or visitor. This is how those who stayed behind called returnees.

making a 'home'.[35] Through the constant questioning of my gender identity (*jin nyal walla ciek?* - are you a girl or a woman? – was usually the first question I was asked in Ler) I came to understand notions of the underlying gender ideology and what made a girl or a woman in the Nuer society. As I was married, but had no children and lived without my husband, the Nuer did not perceive me as being fully a woman. I was also not really a girl since I was already married. Hence, I had to settle for an '*in-flux'* gender identity: *nuss nyal, nuss ciek* – half girl, half woman, or school girl (*nyal duël gɔ̈arä*)[36] and this is how I became known in the community. To recognise that I was a 'local', rather than a complete, foreigner (*khaway*), I was given a local name, 'NyaPiliny', by the area's paramount chief. The name signified that I was considered as a 'daughter' of the land Piliny, the ancestral land of the Dok people. As my complexion always set me apart, local children often called me *NyaPiliny khaway* (foreign NyaPiliny).

My 'in-flux' gender status gave me access to different social circles and allowed me to manoeuvre easily between the worlds of men, women, boys and girls, government and community officials, prophets and religious authorities. Although some anthropologists argue that women researchers become somehow genderless, androgens, or acquire a status of an honorary male (Golde 1970 quoted in Wolf 1996: 8), my openness and readiness to transgress social barriers did not make me lose my 'femininity'. In fact, as was the case for Sharon Hutchinson (1996: 47), men and older boys would often try to strike up a conversation with me either by attempting to 'marry me' or express some sexual joke, which made it clear that in their eyes I remained a marriageable girl. Due to my ability to recognise and respect the different social positions and spaces of women and men, I managed to maintain my status as a *nyal duël gɔ̈arä* without jeopardising being human (*raan*) (see Hutchinson 1996: 44-50).

Being a 'white European woman' was both an advantage and a constraint. I wanted to better understand the lives of women, and hence, I was eager to share their spaces and learn their activities. Lived experience became for me a way to observe and understand the lifeworlds I was trying to study (see Tonkin 1984: 221). I learned how to prepare

[35]They included access to land, limited social networks in Ler and being expected to assist those who had stayed behind.

[36] See Hutchinson's discussion of her status as '*nyal duël gɔ̈arä*' during her fieldwork among the Nuer in the 1980s (1996: 46).

local food, often cooked with girls and women, washed clothes, went to the river to fetch water, tried to milk (occasionally), smeared walls, ground sorghum, shared food and other resources and slept in Nuer *luaak* (barns) and *dueel* (houses). After some time my hostess opened up and included me in family discussions. Some returnee families from Kakuma, including Nyakuol, the widow of an SPLA officer, treated me as their daughter and discussed their children's future.

By doing what the Nuer did, by being engaged in local issues, sharing people's concerns, participating in decision-making and contributing to the family budget, I was getting a glimpse into Nuer life. My presence was recognised by a local young woman, NyaPiliny, who established a special friendship with me through offering me a cow, a Nuer custom. Yet, I managed to become more 'part of' rather than 'apart from' the community only in a few instances, and often when the research participants saw the benefits of having me around. Mostly, I remained an outsider, not only due to my ethnic and racial background, but also due to my social status, class and ability to transgress the gender- and age-separated worlds of the Nuer (Oakley 1983; Gluck and Patai 1991; Patai 1988; Stacey 1991; Wolf 1996; Lammers 2007). I continued to study the life of the Nuer from outside. The longer I stayed among the people, learned their language and showed willingness to conform to their social rules the more I could minimise some of my outsider's characteristics and gain more 'insider' perspectives. As an outsider and someone from a different cultural background, I created for some an opportunity to share experiences and views that they would not normally be able to discuss with family and friends.

Southern Sudan presented another challenge for my fieldwork as a post-war situation, or rather a place in-flux between peace and war. As other anthropologists have shown (see Nordstrom 1996, 2004; Monsutti 2004, 2005; Lubkemann 2007), employing ethnographic methods and living among inhabitants of conflict and post-war environments can be extremely challenging and dangerous. Not only was my personal safety at stake but I was also aware of the effect of my presence on the local population in the villages where I was often the only foreigner, not to mention the only non-local woman. Due to the insecure environment with the proliferation of guns, rebel groups, inter-clan fighting and numerous clashes between southern and northern Sudanese forces in the ongoing struggle for control over oil my stay in Nuerland was precarious.

I often worried that my presence might be detrimental to the local population, especially to the family that I stayed with.

3.3. Studying 'Gender': the Issue of Bias

When taking on and acknowledging feminist bias, one needs to be careful not to over-interpret all gender relations in terms of patriarchal and unequal structures of power (H. Moore 1988). As some feminist anthropologists emphasise, researchers are often unable to see forms of more egalitarian gender relations, even in situation where they exist, due to their insistence of interpretation difference and asymmetry in terms of inequality and hierarchy (see H. Moore 1988: 2 and chapter 2; Leacock 1978; Dwyer 1978).

I agree with Henrietta Moore (1994) that "feminist politics and feminist practice have always required a clear sense of position and of the politics of location" (1994: 8). The issue of positionality relates directly to the question of, what Nancy Miller (1991: 20) called the representativity, (quoted in H. Moore 1994: 9) or put simply, how do we represent the people whose lives we have been studying without speaking for them and about them? (see also Minh-ha 1989)

During my fieldwork, I often faced dilemmas of other feminist researchers about not always revealing the whole truth about my standpoint. Presentation of oneself and the study is an important to establish credibility and can affect the research itself (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 77). Although I never hid the reasons for my being in Kakuma and in Sudan, and presented myself as a student and a doctoral researcher studying changes in gender relations, sometimes I had to emphasise the search for more general information. In Kakuma the UN/NGO promotion of gender equality and programming aimed at enhancing women's position often resulted in men's resistance to gender equality (see chapter 6). This meant that I had to refrain from referring explicitly to 'gender' issues. I was often unable to openly discuss my personal standpoint as I was afraid of antagonising some respondents. However, they and others often expected me to take a pro-women stance and I was repeatedly asked to speak publicly on 'behalf of women'. I realised that bringing in my views and simultaneously listening to those who

had different opinions stimulated discussion and revealed more information on gender ideologies.

Since for most men in Kakuma my interest in gender meant interest in women, I decided to employ a more general term 'culture' and this is what opened up a lot of doors. As the Nuer have been the subject of a few ethnographic studies, many of my respondents knew of Evans-Pritchard's and Hutchinson's works. Some asked me to bring them their books while others warned me not to offend the Nuer through my writings. "*You know Nyarial, Sharon?* [Hutchinson's local name] *She wrote this book Nuer Dilemmas. But we are not in a dilemma. We, the Nuer, and our culture are very strong. You have to be careful what you write about us. She was not right to call us this way*," warned Tot, who worked for a Nuer NGO.

At the same time, the fact that I was interested in learning about people's 'culture' and how things were 'changing' made many open up to me. On my walks through the Kakuma camp or later in Ler, often people asked to be included in 'the book'. Almost every morning in Ler, I had a queue of visitors who would pass by my hut to chat with me and give me 'useful information for the book'. Also, many of my neighbours, acquaintances and respondents invited me to events. "*NyaPiliny khaway, bere, entedi te kuën* [Come NyaPiliny, there is a wedding]. *You have to come and see it, you learn about the Nuer and our culture,"* my proud neighbours told me.

Studying 'culture' as opposed to 'gender' was a way of gaining people's trust. My connections from Kakuma and my attempt to help one of the girls from Kakuma with education made me also popular among the local community in Ler. When I arrived in Ler, many people already knew of my coming and extended invitations to their homes. Those whom I previously met in Kakuma treated me as part of their 'Kakuma social network' and they often saw me as being closer to them than their family members from whom they had been separated for 15 or more years. Due to my stay in Kakuma, I was able to establish connections and access the community in Ler. Collecting information was the next step.

4. HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I KNOW? METHODS, SAMPLING AND NARRATIVES

Starting with the proposition that "all knowledge is situated" (Haraway 1991) and that there is no one feminist method and methodology (Haraway 1991; Mohanty 1991; Harding 1987; Collins 1990; Stacey 1991; Wolf 1996), yet being committed to listening to and including different voices (Collins 1990; hooks 1981, 1990; Stacey 1991; Wolf 1996; Clifford and Marcus 1986: 15), my choice of research methods of data collection and analysis had to be adopted accordingly. As Nelson et al. (1992) assert, "the choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context" (1992: 2).[37] In my view, it is also linked to the theoretical training of the researcher and her methodological point of inquiry. The setting and the type of possibilities that the researcher has at her disposal and what she can actually do are also relevant for the choice of methods (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 6).

My commitment to writing a reflexive ethnography of displacement and emplacement was accomplished through following the stories of people whose lives were often fragmented due to displacement and ruptures caused by wars. Qualitative research situated me in the world of those whose lives I attempted to study and understand. The interpretative, naturalistic approach was the only way to attempt "to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 5). I became a *bricoleur* (Nelson, Teichler and Grossberg 1992; Lévi-Strauss 1966; Weinstein and Weinstein 1991) of representations of social realities, while aiming to preserve the different gender- and age-shaped views and voices of their participants. Graeme Rodgers in his study among a refugee population in South Africa stresses the "continued relevance and importance of small-scale qualitative approaches [in forced migration research], generated largely through intensive, informal and interpersonal interactions between researchers and the forced migrants" (2004: 48). This 'hanging out' with research participants is, in his view, indispensable for research conducted in 'chaotic' situations which characterise refugee condition, where making sense out of the changing social environment and fragmented and disjointed

[37] Schmidt develops a similar argument for research methods among refugees (2007).

experiences cannot be achieved through surveys and quantitative research. I would extend this approach to the study of mobile populations returning to war-torn societies.

In each of the research sites, I resorted to multiple qualitative strategies to substantiate the research. They included participation and observation, in-depth interviews, life (hi)stories of individuals and families, semi-structured interviews, following court cases, carrying out two surveys and secondary materials to arrive at an in-depth understanding of changes in gender relations and social order. In addition, I used video and photography as supporting tools of data collection. However, the best method of gathering information was not through questioning but through conversation. I often engaged in vivid conversations with my respondents, friends, acquaintances, or almost anyone whom I met on the road during my daily ventures out in the community. I posed controversial questions, expressing my surprise or disagreement in order to learn more about the views of the people with whom I was sharing my life. In a feminist fashion, and against the positivist notions of "scientific distancing from the object of research" (Adler and Adler 1987, cited in Flick 2002: 54), through sharing own stories and living with a host family in Ler I attempted to minimise the distance between the all-powerful researcher and the researched (Wolf 1996; Oakley 1990; Gluck 1977; Mansumoto 1996; Stacey 1991).

I also learned a lot about gender practices through conversations about my own 'culture' as many I encountered were curious about marriage practices and the position of girls, women and men in my own society. The learning-through-dialogue and "matching cultural horizons" on different aspects of the social life is similar to the dialogical hermeneutic method advocated by Michrina and Richards (1996:26). It is through dialogue with the respondents and participants of the study that the researcher arrives at "negotiated truths" (ibid.1996: 29), which involve both equalising power relations between the researcher and respondents as well as acknowledging bias.

These narratives of displacement and emplacement emerged in a variety of contexts, offered by familiar respondents and by strangers. They emerged in the distribution centre in Kakuma, during school breaks, in the market over coffee, in local buses and on lorries, in dugout canoes or on days-long walks, while starting a fire, preparing an evening meal, during cultivation, at burials, weddings and after a Sunday prayer. As in

the case of Malkki's research among Burundian refugees in Tanzania (1995), these conversations about different aspects of lives helped to contextualise and put wider reflections and findings in a historical context.

4.1. Ethnographic and narrative methods

The ethnographic method which I employed was based on long-term "participant observation" (Holly 1984: 14 in Ellen 1984) with distinguishing between the acts of participation and observation (Creswell 1994; Silverman 1997; Adler and Adler 1998). Securing 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) of particular events, rituals and customs and using lived experiences without "elevating the experiential to the level of the authentic" (Silverman 1997: 248) were part of the approach. In some contexts I was more of a participant, and in others more an observer. Since there are "no objective observations", the negotiations of the observations situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 31) become essential in reflecting on the researcher's own role in participation and observation and how one's presence changes the interactions, actions and 'talk' of the observed.

In Kakuma, my role as a 'participant observer' was rather limited to observation. I attended events in the community, including weddings, Nuer and Dinka courts, Kenyan courts, community gatherings, church festivities and UNHCR/NGO-run workshops on customary laws, gender and human rights and civic education. I also participated in several community meetings with UNHCR, NGOs and Sudanese representatives on repatriation to Sudan. During my visits to clinics, schools, churches, training workshops, community gatherings, food and sanitary pad distributions run by aid agencies and while accompanying a few UNHCR-organised repatriation convoys I observed, took notes and occasionally asked questions or debated with some of the participants. In sum, I tried to go to any event which I thought was relevant or which Nuer women and men suggested would enhance my knowledge about camp life.

In Nuerland, through living in the community, I became more of a participant in the daily life of the people around me going beyond a mere observation, a role that could be described as an active-member-researcher (see Adler and Adler 1998: 91). I still continued observing people's lives by, among others, attending local and township

court sessions, marriage, burial and other ceremonies, church services, community and NGO ran workshops, coordination meetings between the government and aid agencies, elections of the local commissioner and arrival of returnee convoys from Khartoum and Kakuma. Due to time I spent in the community I was also able to overcome the barrier of pure observation and managed to effectively 'participate' in the life of the people, to share the same meanings with them and socialise into their culture (Holly 1984: 30). Since I wanted to better understand the networks of support among the Nuer, and discover "their cultural meaning, emic rules and their logic" (ibid), I needed to do what a good neighbour would do – taking the ill to hospital, administering medicines, helping children with school work and helping out in the household, including contributions to the family budget. Sometimes when my landlady was away, I stayed with her children. As a *nyakhda* (co-wife) I had to 'help out' by cooking, bathing, taking them to hospital and generally caring for them.

The lines between the 'observer' and the 'observed' were also blurred in terms of the reversal of the roles (Angorino and Mays de Pérez 2003; Wolf 1996). As much as I was trying to learn and 'observe' the Nuer, they were also observing me. In the mornings when I was catching up on my notes in my hut, my host children observed through a small window my work. With my arrival in the homestead, we constructed a pit latrine, which was a novelty in the neighbourhood. My neighbours often commented on my 'visits' to the latrine shouting to each other across the fences. Through their observation of 'my weird behaviour' and occasional laughs which it caused I was learning not only about the Nuer but also about myself (see Rabinow 1977).

One of the weaknesses of observational methods is the fact that observers have to mainly rely on their own perceptions. In my approach I tried to correct this shortcoming by discussing some of my observations with research assistants, research participants and others.

One of the main methods of studying the fragmented lives of the people and the society at large was through collecting family[38]life (hi)stories.[39] Family stories are based on

[38] I used the notion of 'family' rather than household or kin members (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuñiga 1999b:2 quoted in Brettell 2003: 46; Goody 1962), since I chose to talk to the closest kin members, parents, children, wives, husbands, grandparents and siblings. Some of these relations

life history research (Cole and Knowles 2001) and embedded in the passage of personal time as remembered and narrated (Brettell 2003: 45). I used family life stories was a method to situate people's experiences and their accounts of gender practices and ideologies in space and in time. This approach follows the shift in anthropology and in qualitative research from an emphasis on structure to an emphasis on process (Ortner 1984).

Family life stories[40] allowed for an in-depth inquiry into the complexities of people's personal trajectories and changes in social relations. During the war family members were dispersed throughout the country and the region and hence subjected to different experiences which in turn influenced the strategies and experiences of 'homecoming' and emplacement in the context of family (re)unification. During my research I followed some 15 families in mapping their life stories from refugee camps in Kenya to settling in Ler. Intergenerational diversity of views was ensured by interviewing women, girls, boys and men from different age groups, those who were displaced and those who had stayed behind. Gathering family life stories was useful both in identifying moments of personal change and how views on what is the appropriate 'gender practice' have been evolving due to experiences of war, displacement and return. These personal stories of displacement and emplacement helped me to understand the complexity of people's experiences as individuals and family and community members.

Narrative methods have been used in forced migration research as useful tools to examine "how people themselves as 'experiencing subjects', make sense out of violence and turbulent change" (Eastmonds 2007: 249). Personal accounts give also a more in-depth and diversified image of the over-generalised 'refugee experience'. I concur with other researchers who have used life stories in refugee settings that it is

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overlapped with household membership, but this was not always the case. I interviewed sisters who used to live together in the same household before the war, but due to displacement, and then later marriage into different households, had separated.

[39] Life story and oral history research have been preferred by feminist researchers in creating space for women's personal stories and views (Shostak 1981; Oakley 1990; Abu-Lughod 1991; Gluck and Patai 1991; Behar 1996; Wolf 1996), particularly for refugee women (Ghorashi 2008).

[40] Family stories consisted of in-depth interviews with different family members whose trajectories during war, displacement and emplacement varied. I followed the ideas of life stories adopted by Eastmond 1996 in her study of the Cambodian returnees and by Caroline Brettell (1986, 2002) in her long-term studies of Portuguese migrants.

particularly suitable to researching marginalised populations and has proved very useful in illuminating views of and giving voice to refugees (Eastmond 1996, 2007; Powels 2002, 2004; Ghorashi 2008). Life (hi)story research allowed me to untangle some of the historical elements of identity, particularly important in terms of gender identity and ideology constructions. The method also created space for personal narratives and reflection on past experiences (Ghorashi 2008: 120), including traumatic experiences of war, family separation and death, and helps to situate the current transformation of gender relations in a wider historical framework.

Illuminating how family oral histories brought out diverse displacement experiences was challenging. Due to the high rate of Nuer mobility it was impossible to interview all key family members in each family. However, in each of the 15 families, I managed to interview at least one member who had been displaced and one who had stayed behind. Another challenge that narrative methods present is the actual understanding and interpretation of narratives and the power relations between the listener and the speaker. Eastmond in her essay on the use of narratives in forced migration research, referring to Bruner (1986), points out the different layers of narratives: life as lived, life as experienced, life as told and life as text (2007: 249). Both the nature of the inquiry, the context in which the narratives are told as well as the personal, historical, cultural and political make-up of the researcher are determinants of the actual story told.

Moreover, I conducted both structured and unstructured interviews, using either a consistent set of questions, an interview guide or a conversation-type method, respectively (Bryman 2001: 314-315).[41] In addition, I carried out several focus group and group interviews. Semi-structured interviews included in-depth interviews with elders from the community, officials from government institutions, NGOs or the UN and community leaders, both in Kakuma and in Sudan. While formal interviews with officials were a way to obtain official views on some of the gender aspects of repatriation, refugee and returnee assistance, interviews with community members were a way of validating some of the findings.

[41] Unlike Fontana and Frey (2003: 68), I organised structured interviews around open-ended questions to obtain comparable information on specific topics.

Through in-depth interviews with elders in Kakuma and in Ler, I gained a historical perspective on gender norms and practices in Sudan before the wars. I also collected accounts of how gender relations have been transforming as a result of conflict-induced displacement. Although I was aware that the views of the elders would not be 'objective', their comments and perceptions gave useful insights into changing gender norms and practices in the context of displacement. They offer an understanding of the fluid nature of gender relations and how they are being transformed over time and space. A similar approach was adopted by Katy Gardner in her study of the narratives of migration of elderly Bengali men and women (2002). In her analysis of the transnational life of elders, Gardner emphasises its influence on their experiences of the "power relations between people, places and institutions" (2002: 4). Elders' historical narratives in my study combined with more historical secondary literature provide a benchmark for identifying points and forces of transformation of gender relations among the Nuer.

I used focus groups a few times in Kakuma, among boys, young men and girls. I carried out ten focus groups in Kakuma, including two with girls (four participants in each), two with the same group of boys (eight and seven participants), two with the same group of young men (ten and eight participants), and three with Nuer court members (five, four and seven male respondents respectively). Most focus groups were in English as all the young respondents spoke it fluently. For those who had problems in understanding some questions, a fellow participant translated into Nuer. This method was useful for two reasons. First, I wanted to stimulate a discussion among young Nuer refugee men, boys and girls in Kakuma to record their observations on changes in gender relations as a result of displacement. Secondly, discussions encouraged reflections on the challenges posed by conflict-induced displacement, war and life in refugee camps, which the participants might not have offered or thought about in one-to-one conversations.

In southern Sudan I convened focus groups only twice. I interviewed a group of young returnee boys on their experiences of return and emplacement in Sudan and a group of women and girls (who were participating in a community midwives training organised by an NGO in Ler) on their views on position of women in Sudan and changes in

gender relations. This method proved successful in stimulating views of shyer respondents and gathering diverse views in a short period of time.

The use of group interviews in other cases was coincidental. Although I intended to interview individuals by themselves, due to the nature of the open communal life of the rural Nuer, this was challenging. Neighbours or passers-by stopped to listen to our conversations as they were usually conducted in the courtyards of homesteads, sometimes contributing their own views.

To correlate and check some of the trends becoming evident from observation and qualitative interviews, I administered two surveys in Ler. The first focused on the marriage history of those respondents who had stayed behind and those who had been displaced. I interviewed a total of 30 women and 30 men, half of each group returnees and half stayees. The purpose of the marital survey was to obtain larger comparable data on changes in marriage and divorce patterns over time among the Nuer. As there was similar data available from previous studies by Evans-Pritchard (1951) and Hutchinson (1996) the results of the marital survey had the advantage of having long-term comparability. Apart from basic demographic and historical information and the particular marriage history of a respondent, through open-ended questions I solicited respondents' views on changes in marriage and divorce due to war and displacement and current practices of marriage. The second survey covered experiences of return and homecoming including socio-economic challenges to integration. A total of 30 returnees from Kakuma and Khartoum were interviewed, including 15 women and men.

Both surveys were carried out in the last month of my fieldwork in Ler. The interviews took place usually in respondents' homesteads or in any place convenient for them, sometimes in the garden during the planting season, or while cooking. I administered the questionnaires in written form, in just over half of the cases with translation by my research assistant who was fluent both in English and Nuer (see below). By then I was familiar with most of the inhabitants of Ler and my credibility was well established. These factors minimised some of the inherent shortcomings of surveys, including distrust of the interviewer, providing partial information and the interviewer not being

familiar with local meanings attached by respondents to discussed categories (Fontana and Frey 2003: 69).

As the sample for the surveys was small they were not intended to generate large-scale quantitative data. Rather, their main purpose was to check and validate some of the emerging findings and gather more focused data on precise gender practices discerned during the fieldwork. In addition, the socio-economic survey carried out among returnees was designed to identify common and varying experiences of return and settling-in process, the meanings that people attached to their experiences and how they varied based on gender, age and marital status.

4.2. Visualising narratives

I also used photography and film as ways of recording diverse information, not only words, but also people's gestures, group dynamics, and the interiors of their dwellings (Banks and Morphy 1997; Grimshaw 2001; Grimshaw and Revetz 2005). Through photography I consistently documented different stages of the research, and was often asked to take photographs for my respondents. Through the way they posed and presented themselves on the photos, I was able to gain a better understanding of changing gender norms and identities through changes in clothing and presentation.

My initial idea of using visual tools was to solicit local meanings of daily experiences of gendered lives in Kakuma and in Sudan. I had planned to offer training on participatory video with some of the research participants and let them record their own observations of gender issues in their communities (see Ramella and Olmos 2005). However, this was problematic not only due to logistical constraints but also because of NGOs. In the Kakuma camp one agency NGO, FilmAid, was already running participatory video classes with refugee youth who were producing their own films on 'issues in the community'. These usually addressed 'social problems' that NGOs and UNHCR were trying to target, including forced marriages, HIV, girls' education and women's rights. When I asked research participants to document their local meanings of gender, the result was similar to the FilmAid pro-gender equality propaganda. Lack of electricity in Kakuma and then later in Ler was a further constraint to using

electronic equipment. I used a video camera only a few times in Kakuma and Ler to record people's daily activities and images of the research sites.

Visual methods proved, however, useful in a way which I initially did not anticipate. Before I left Kakuma many refugees asked me to take messages to their families in Nuerland. Some handed me letters but others wanted to pass oral messages as they knew that their families were not able to read. I then came up with an idea of recording video messages from refugees in Kakuma and taking them to their family members in Sudan. I recorded seven messages in Kakuma. In Ler, I managed to record responses from family members to their relatives in Kakuma and delivered them back to the refugees in the camp at the end of my fieldwork. In addition, I filmed 15 messages from Kakuma returnees whose lives I followed in Sudan to their relatives and friends who stayed in the camp (see figures 1 and 2).

Visual methods have been criticised as rather intrusive tools which often put respondents on their guard and take away the spontaneous and natural characteristics of the setting (Loizos 1993). In my case, the use of visual messages recorded as personal messages from long-separated families proved very insightful.[42] It provided a direct, uninterrupted, objective and non-obstructive way of recording people's views on their experiences of life in refugee camps and of return to Nuerland. This information was often different from the answers that returnees provided during the socio-economic surveys, as they were trying to portray their lives in certain ways to those who remained on the other side of the border. Power differentials between the researcher and the research subjects became less visible as film and video created a neutral space and a direct communication channel. The video messaging was a small direct contribution that I was able to make to some research participants. In some cases, family members separated for decades had not been in touch for a long time, let alone having the possibility to see each other. The film image enabled them to reconnect, to share their lives, experiences, to see each other and to learn about each other's predicaments. The power of film proved its own value in bringing the disrupted lives of displaced families together and provided me with a different reflexive opportunity. Seeing the emotions of recording and watching the family messages and being able to

[42] See also Rodgers and Spitz 2007.

watch and listen to the material several times, I was able to gain a more complex insight into the meanings of personal and family experiences during war and displacement.

Use of video and photography can pose and have been criticised for the ethical implications if the people who are being filmed are not informed of the purpose of the recordings. I remained transparent in my approach and before and at the end of every recording I explained how the material would be used and analysed by myself. I also sought participants' view of whether these recordings could be shared with wider public. In almost all cases, the participants were very eager for their messages to be broadcast publically. For those who objected, I respected their view and kept the recordings confidential.

Figure 2. Family in Kakuma listening to a video message from family members in Ler, September 2007.

Figure 3. Family stories through video messages: Families in Ler recording and listening to messages from Kakuma, July/August, 2007.

4.3. Sampling and access 'in-flux'

In identifying research participants, I used snowballing and opportunistic sampling (Bernard 1995) both in Kakuma and in Sudan while securing multiple entry points into the community. At the beginning of my stay in Kakuma, my two research assistants[43] became also the key gatekeepers in my access to the community. Their language skills and knowledge of the community allowed me access to different groups in the Nuer refugee community. In addition, I also used other entry points to the Nuer community through a variety of other activities I participated in.

In southern Sudan, my major entry point were returnees from Kakuma, whom I followed on their journeys 'home'. Although I was initially worried about finding returnees, already on the first day in Sudan, in Rubkona, a county capital, returnees found me. As I was quite visible in Kakuma and many people knew of my presence and my research once I arrived in southern Sudan I met returnees in the market, on the road, in homesteads, bus stops and in government, NGO and UN offices. By delivering messages and letters from family members in Kakuma, I gained multiple entry points to the local community in Ler and in Bentiu and managed to follow family life stories.

I also travelled throughout the Unity State to different locations where I always came across returnees from Kakuma. As some of them decided to stay in towns where they had better prospects of finding civil service of NGO jobs, I spent a significant amount of time in Bentiu and Rubkona, visiting them and gathering family life stories. In my encounters, I talked to returnees from Kakuma and Khartoum and those who had stayed behind, and ensured I included men, women, young and old in my conversations.

At first, both in Kakuma and in Sudan, I had much easier access to men than to women and girls. I recall one of my first observations from February 2007:

> [Another] challenge is access to women – I feel as if I have been moving in the world of men: soldiers, UN and NGO workers, the educated Nuer and the ones in the public spaces, the ones with access to resources and language skills, men who have time and space in their lives to accommodate someone like me. And then there are women – hidden, in the homes, illiterate and me not knowing the language, which complicates

[43] I provide information on the research assistants in section: 4.7.

> communication. In fact, these women intimidate me… they are so strong and full of pride that I do not know how to deal with them. Often I get an impression that I am just a *nyakhaway* [a foreigner] for them.
>
> And then comes the group that is the most hidden for me: the girls. Structurally silenced, behind the doors of their homes, at the rivers and behind their impassive faces, they are the least accessible group for me. How do I overcome it? How do I gain their trust?

Gaining trust of respondents is not only about building rapport, breaking the ice and confounding prejudices that the respondents might have against the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Krulfeld 1994; Creswell 1994); it is as much about breaking one's own prejudice and the barrier of fear and misunderstanding and learning about oneself (Rabinow 1977). Although the proud and secluded Nuer women intimidated me at the beginning, the challenge was for me to reach out to them and try to understand their own positions. I did this both by doing what the women and girls did in their daily activities, but also by honouring elder women and including their voices in the stories, I became more of a 'woman' and less of a *nyakhaway*. I also made clear to women that I wanted to learn from them and that I was interested in women's views on life. At the end, without jeopardising my close friendships and wide access to male respondents, I not only broke the ice, but I became known in Ler as a supporter of women and girls. I was regularly visited by female neighbours and acquaintances who came either for advice or to share intimate stories with me. With some of my female friends, we shared stories and jokes about family, sex, desires and marriage. Some discretely asked for help with abortion or escaping a forced marriage. As with other female researchers, playing my 'gender card' and doing what the local women did, I was able to establish close and intimate relations (Wolf 1996: 9).

4.4. Narrating stories: language and knowledge production

Another challenge during my fieldwork was the language of interactions and conversations. Although qualitative methods based largely on oral techniques are flexible and have been used successfully in a variety of disaster settings, including research among refugees in the camps (e.g. de Waal 1997; Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Ryles 1991; Turton 1997; Malkki 1995; Schechter 2004), the language or multiplicity of languages used might pose obstacles in access to knowledge by the fieldworker. I carried out interviews and conversations directly and with translation in several

languages, mostly in English, but also in Arabic, Nuer, and Dinka. In Kakuma, most of my interactions with research participants, especially young men, boys and girls were in English without a need for an interpretation. Most of them grew up in the camp and were educated in the English-based Kenyan curriculum. They often felt more comfortable communicating in English or in Kiswahili rather than in their mother tongues due to the multiplicity of languages among the diverse refugee community.

As I was unable to communicate in English or in Arabic with the elder population or those who had recently arrived in the camp I hired two assistants who also became my friends and 'interpreters' of the Nuer 'culture' and customs. Thok, a 23-year old youth leader in the Nuer community, working for LWF's sanitation training programme, came to Kakuma from Akobo in eastern Nuerland in 2001. Nyakuoth, a 16-year old has lived in Kakuma since 1996. She came from Western Upper Nile near Ler. Recognising the gendered nature of interviewing (Smith 1987; Collins 1990; Oakley 1990; Reinharz 199; Behar 1996; Hertz 1997a, ; Fontana and Frey 2003) whereby "gender filters knowledge" (Denzin 1989: 116) (meaning that the sex of the interviewer and the interviewee matter) for interviews with women and girls I worked with my female research companion, Nyakuoth, whereas for interviews with male respondents, I usually worked with Thok.[44] They were fluent in both English and Nuer and were able to interpret conversations and translate written documents.

In Ler, I was learning the Nuer language from an elderly Nuer pastor and through daily interactions with my host family. At the end of my stay, I was able to follow conversations and conduct basic interviews. With those returning from displacement to Khartoum I communicated in Arabic. With returnees from Kakuma we interacted in English. For other interviews and interpretation of events, I worked with a research assistant and a companion, Kuok, a returnee from Kakuma, or used occasional help from household members who spoke English. Kuok graduated from Teachers' College in Kakuma and spoke fluent English. His language knowledge but also understanding of Nuer social relations were very helpful in navigating through the Nuer narratives.

[44] I conducted training for the research assistants in interpretations and translation techniques, including issues of confidentiality, anonymity and accuracy of translation.

Although reliance on research assistants and translators might often be problematic (Wolf 1996; Oboler 1986; Kumar 1992), when its imperfections are acknowledged and possibilities that it creates identified, this particular relationship can open up a good access to local meanings and experiences (Rabinow 1977). The relationships that I established with Nyakuoth in Kakuma and Kuok in Ler went beyond translation. Instead, they became knowledgeable friends and translators not only of words but also of cultural meanings. Also, through their experiences of displacement, life in war and in refugee camps, and in case of Kuok, return to Nuerland, I acquired unique, in-depth and often inaccessible knowledge about the personal changes resulting from forced displacement. By participating in their lives and by sharing their experiences I was able to deepen my understanding of the meaning and experience of displacement and emplacement for young women and men. I developed a similar relationship to Paul Rabinow's (1997) friendship with his research companion, Abd al-Malik ben Lahcen, who served not only as Rabinow's translator, but also provided him with access to the cultural ways of the Moroccan subjects under study.

In carrying out my fieldwork, I was not always working with research assistants. In Kakuma, I often ventured out to events without their presence. In Nuerland the more acquainted I became with the environment and the more comfortable I was in the language so my need to rely on translation subsided.

5. CAN 'FIELDWORK AFTER-FIRE' BE ETHICAL?

Social research is subject to several ethical criteria, including neutrality of the researcher, securing informed consent of research participants, respecting the right to privacy and protection from harm (Fontana and Frey 2003: 88-89). Few would dispute the last two ethical concerns but the first two are more problematic (Akeyord 1984), especially when carrying out research among marginalised and impoverished populations, in development and feminist research and in the context of highly insecure and volatile post-war environments. Is being neutral, detached and not affected by violence and injustices possible while researching in refugee camps and war-torn societies? How can we, as researchers, carry out studies in such environments without jeopardising our and our participants' security?.

Ethical issues regarding the research process and writing become even more pronounced when studying marginalised, impoverished populations who have gone through traumatic experiences (see Scheper-Hughes 1995; Jok 1998; Turton 2003; Koser 2004; Powels 2004; Rodgers 2004; MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007). The principle of 'do no harm' remains key to ensuring the safety and security of the research participants. Throughout the fieldwork and writing, I respected confidentiality by using pseudonyms and carefully handling written and other recorded data. I coded computer files and names of respondents and password protected them. I stored notepads in safe locations. I paid special attention to ensuring the security and privacy of participants as the topic of the research was sometimes seen as sensitive and problematic.

The principles of *respect* for persons in the study and *beneficence* are central to the research process and are the basis for the informed consent requirement of any institutional review process (MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007: 301). They are expected to safeguard participants from coercion, exploitation and risk. Accordingly, before each of the interviews, I explained the research purpose, methods, risks and benefits and the general topic of the conversation to the respondents, assured them of anonymity and sought their voluntary consent. Obtaining written consent proved potentially more harmful in the context of my fieldwork, as the respondents were too afraid to provide anything in writing in view of insecurity in Kakuma and in Nuerland.

The fieldworker carrying out research in 'after-fire' situations is also faced with the dilemma of 'neutrality' while faced with violence and injustice. Refugee camps and especially post-war settings often pose security considerations both for the researcher as well as the population under study (Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992). Proliferation of guns, security incidents, rebel movements and occasional fighting in Kakuma and in southern Sudan were commonplace. This in-flux security situation not only impacted the logistics of my research but had also profound effects on myself and my understanding of the social setting (see Scheper-Hughes 1992; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Monsutti 2004; Nordstrom 2004). Fear accompanied me throughout the fieldwork due to occasional fighting and shooting in Kakuma and in Nuerland. I had to learn how to stay 'sane' and 'safe'. However, experiencing fear allowed me to see beneath the surface and get a glimpse of the

everyday life in war-torn society of people who had witnessed daily brutality, experienced extreme suffering and been subjected to rapes and killings. Witnessing people's suffering and listening to their narratives often left me often speechless and depressed, at times causing me to burst out crying and to have recurrent nightmares.

I faced a further ethical dilemma. Southern Sudan has experienced some of the most brutal civil conflict the world has seen in the past half century (see chapters 4 and 5). Many of the men whom I met clearly had blood on their hands yet were now in high political positions entrusted with 'building the new South Sudan'. I was often faced with the moral dilemma whether to share a conversation or a meal with those who had killed, murdered and made so many suffer. I felt uncomfortable and yet unable to keep my distance, as I was aware that my access to the research site was often dependent on these contacts.

My other ethical consideration was how my writing would do justice to the lives of those who survived and had been through traumatic conflict experiences. I felt, and continue to feel, that I have a duty to write their stories for others to understand the meaning of war and displacement as lived experiences. Yet how do I write about these gendered experiences without taking away the rupture and imminence from people's stories? How can I do justice through my DPhil thesis to lives fractured and fragmented by war, displacement, family separation, death and violence? I often feel unable to find the words to accurately convey the stories as lived and as told. This is the biggest ethical dilemma which I am faced with, not only as a researcher, but as a person.

Jacobsen and Landau argue that ethical practice demands the same objectivity and neutrality required of a true scientist (2003a, 2003b). However, this poses a problem of critical distance (both social and physical) between 'us' (researchers) and 'them' (research participants). I was often at the crossroads and intersections of my position as a 'neutral' researcher and as a neighbour (see Rabinow 1977; Rodgers 2004; Hammond 2004a; Lammers 2005, 2007). As a neighbour I did things that any good neighbour in a Nuer village would do: I helped with the education of children, I took people to hospital, shared food and resources and helped with domestic and community chores. Due to my access to the international humanitarian world, I passed information on the situation of refugees and returnees to international organisations.

A key dilemma in feminist research is the often-unbearable tension between principles of neutrality and non-intervention in the research setting and the feminist agenda of transformative politics (see Mies 1982, 1983, 1990; Patai 1991; Scheper-Hughes 1992, 1995; Schrijvers 1986; Benmayor 1991; Lammers 2007). My stance reflects the call of Maria Mies for "conscious partiality", i.e. the need to identify with the research participants through the "view from below". One has to be cautious to listen to local views and meanings of gender politics and empowerment transformations in order not to impose intrusive western agendas. In my research I sympathised with the situation of women who often suffered from their subordinate gender positions. I often intervened on behalf of girls and women and pleaded not only with their husbands and fathers, but also with local authorities and international organisations promoting gender equality. However, these interventions were upon initiative and with support of local women themselves.

When faced with huge discrepancies of gender inequality and injustice in Kakuma and in Ler, I could not stay detached and uninvolved. Perceived as a 'sympathiser of women', in some cases the positions I adopted went beyond mere expressions of my views towards more active involvement in pro-feminist action. In this way, I sometimes crossed the line from 'observer' to 'agent of change' in the daily practice of gender relations. In particular, I assisted Nyakuoth, my research assistant in Kakuma, with a grant to continue secondary education in a boarding school in Nairobi. This action, taken in agreement with Nyakuoth's family, caused several changes in Nyakuoth and her family lives, including her resistance to be married and her standing up to male relatives (see chapter 6). Hence, mine was not merely a fly-on-the-wall presence but one often shaped by my direct involvement. I stayed involved in Nyakuoth's (and others') life after my departure from Sudan through sending money for education and regular phone contacts. Similarly to Elisabeth Enslin's work among village women in Nepal and her involvement in their quest for public space, I believe that changes in access to education for girls and women have the greatest potential in challenging some of the entrenched patriarchal and discriminatory gender norms. I concur with Enslin's (1994) and Scheper-Hughes's (1992, 1995) view that involvement in local projects might be a way of fully realising feminist sympathies. However, I do not believe that my actions had any profound impact on the changing notions of gender

ideologies and gender attitudes. If they did, this would suggest, rather arrogantly, that I was more of an insider among the Nuer. We should humbly remember that as researchers and coincidental temporary participants in others' lives, we have only limited power over our respondents. Our actions remain situated and limited in scope (see Lammers 2007; Patai 1991).

This 'need for action' which I often felt while witnessing injustice, poverty, gender-based violence and discrimination of women and girls was also linked to my dilemma of how to reciprocate the hospitality and openness of my research participants. Although throughout my fieldwork I tried not to create expectations this was not always successful. During my farewell with friends and neighbours in Ler, I was presented with lists of requests including clothing, mobile phones, books, education grants and starting local projects. These continued after my return to Europe as male friends emailed to ask for money (or cows) for marriage payments. The dilemma of how, when and what to reciprocate has preoccupied feminist and other researchers and resulted in the call for more advocacy-oriented action and participatory research (Mies 1990; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Benmayor 1991; Katz 1996). Contesting the detached stand often advocated in anthropology about rewarding research participants, Ellen Lammers argues that often by not giving anything to those who help with research one may introduce equally dangerous bias (2007: 76-77). Some form of reciprocity for those whom we study is part of, in the words of the Ghanaian philosopher Kweme Gyekye, "being a person" (1997). This also corresponds to the understanding of being a human (*raan*) in Nuer. As a Nuer male elder explained, to be considered a person one needs to share with those who live around her/him. Bringing gifts for friends and neighbours in Kakuma and in Ler, whether clothes, cosmetics, food, kitchenware, books, toys and others was part of my 'giving back'. I also contributed financially to the construction of houses or bridewealth payments. I helped out with school assignments and took the sick to the local hospital. In most cases, 'giving back' to those with whom I created a relationship was through friendship and empathy at a personal level. The stand of a detached neutral unengaged researcher is simply not possible and morally inappropriate in an environment which is socially intertwined and where community systems rely on the active participation of each member (Gyekye 1997). Hence, 'giving' is part of any fieldwork experience and what is required is a consideration of not 'whether to give' but rather how, when and what to give. I took

these decisions in consultation with the people themselves. In cases when assistance was not possible or not necessary, I clearly explain my constraints as well as discussed the necessity of whether to give with the research participants. The act of giving has to be carefully weighted and considered as part of the overall knowledge production process (Lammers 2007: 80).

6. MAKING SENCE OF 'WHAT I SAW'? ANALYSIS AND WRITING-UP

Exit from 'the field' or the geographical location does not necessarily imply the end of fieldwork. In my view, research is a continuous process of discovery and surprise, often filled with unexpected events and twists which have to be accommodated by the researcher. In *Writing Cultures,* Clifford and Marcus (1986) stress the continuity of fieldwork through analysis and writing-up. I agree with this approach and that of feminist researchers who argue that fieldwork never ends and its impact is so fundamental that it stays with the researcher for most of her life. I see research and the fieldwork as ongoing processes not only in the relation to the geographical 'field' but rather as a continuum, from the library to the research site and back to the researcher's desk. Many researchers, including myself, continue to maintain a strong connection to respondents and research participants they befriended. The impact of fieldwork might be so strong that it is only through maintaining this connection that an ethnographer is able to make sense of the data and the writing process. At least this was so in my case. Throughout the data analysis and writing process, 'the field' was ever present in my memories, dreams and sometimes nightmares. Thanks to technology, through photographs, video clips, phone calls and email I maintained contact with my research assistants and others whom I met in Kakuma and Nuerland. These exchanges involved also discussion of some of the interpretations of the material that I collected. Hence, the fieldwork continued throughout analysis and writing-up stages including discussions of findings with research participants by email and phone calls.

Making sense out of collected data and of what one has learned during fieldwork is an overwhelming and challenging task, called by Denzin "the art of interpretation" (2003: 313). It constitutes an integral part of fieldwork in terms of translating 'the field' to the text and to the reader (ibid: 314). To arrive at, what Van Maanen (1988) called "the final tale of the field", the researcher needs to confront several problems and stages of

making decisions and choices: sense making, representation, legitimatisation and desire (Denzin 2003: 318). Sense making or data analysis required working through collected material, including notes, interview transcripts, surveys, video recording and photographs. It consisted of organising piles of notes and data by indexing, coding, sorting and dividing into emerging categories, themes and sub-themes (see Miles and Huberman 1994). I used 'gender' as the key coding category and looked for its different expressions in all collected material.

Before starting the process I was aware of some of the themes that came out during the fieldwork, for example 'changing notions of masculinity due to war and displacement' or 'emerging independent women households'. However, it was only the continuous process of reading and re-reading my notes combined with meticulous coding and organising the material that led me to identify all the themes. I organised the material around some 42 organisational broad categories, not only related to forced displacement, and indexed the material accordingly. Each of the categories had a number of sub-categories, and this is how I started identifying main themes and thematic narratives (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995: 170). Although several software qualitative data analytical programmes exist, I opted for manual coding to ensure close reading of the often hidden interpretations. Using different colours and index names I coded over 2,000 pages of notes, in addition to analysis of the qualitative surveys.

By staying close to the voices and ethnographic material I chose excerpts that convey some of the thematic narratives and developed arguments around them. The excerpts were not merely illustrations of points but rather "building blocks for constructing and telling a story" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995: 171). I continued identifying themes and categories throughout the writing process, and writing was thus part of the analytic process.

In addition to data collected first hand, I consulted secondary materials such as the few ethnographies of southern Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1941, 1950, 1951; Deng 1972, 1995; James 1973; Hutchinson 1996; Jok 1996) and those with specific focus on gender relations (Hutchinson 1996; 2000; Jok 1998) which provided insight into the historical context of gender relations. This prevented me from getting an ahistorical perspective, or reinventing the wheel. I heeded Rosaldo's warning that "those who forget their past

are condemned to repeat it and by the notion that critical reappraisals, the active re-appropriation of past works, should play a significant role in shaping future analyses" (in Clifford and Marcus 1986: 78).

Reflexivity, i.e. acknowledging my role as a researcher in the world that I studied (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1994), played an important role throughout the data collection, analysis and writing-up. Although there is "no simple and direct link between choice of topic and methods and the theoretical perspectives that guide the researcher" (Aull Davis 1999: 44), one needs to be aware of how theoretical training influences the researcher. In discussing my own historical and social positions in the different stages oft research, analysis and writing-up, as well as how my own influence and stands mediated the process of knowledge production, I offer here one of the interpretations, rather than an absolute knowledge,[45] of the realities lived by the contemporary Nuer both in exile and after 'return'. Acknowledging and interweaving the active role of researcher in knowledge production is often absent from forced displacement and refugee studies. This is therefore another theoretical and methodological contribution that I attempt to make. I avoid the pitfalls indicated by some researchers of positioning the researcher in the centre of the analysis while marginalising those under study (Patai 1991; Bhavnani 1993; Scheper-Hughes 1983, 1992; Wolf 1996; H. Moore 1994). The focus of the study remains on the experiences and stories of those lives I followed throughout the fieldwork.

7. CONCLUSION

Carrying out fieldwork in highly marginalised communities and in volatile insecure environments of refugee camps and 'after-fire' war-torn societies poses numerous logistical challenges and ethical dilemmas. These often create moral tensions for feminist researchers. In this chapter, I have presented the methodological and epistemological choices which guided my research design, implementation and analysis. My feminist stand influenced the choice of research focus and selection of qualitative methods in studying changes in gender relations due to conflict-induced displacement. I used a reflexive ethnography of displacement and emplacement which

[45] Haraway 1991; Strathern 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson 1994; Patai 1991.

followed the lives of people and their stories through the multi-sited fieldwork. In tracing the fragmented lives of individuals and communities, family life stories and cross-border video messages proved to be the best research methods.

The claim of 'neutrality' in social research has been successfully contradicted and disputed by feminist research as well as research on marginalised and disposed populations. This is also the case for research in highly politicised 'after-fire' war-torn communities. To paraphrase Punch (1986) and Fontana and Frey (2003), we need to exercise common sense and responsibility foremost to the population under study, the research project itself and to lastly to ourselves if research among marginalised population, especially refugees, is to be ethical (MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007; Rodgers 2004; Lammers 2005).

Dilemmas persist after leaving the 'field' for this does not necessarily lead to the end of 'fieldwork'. It continues throughout the data analysis, interpretation and writing-up process, often staying with the ethnographer for the rest of her life. Interconnections between 'the field' and 'home', as Anna Tsing points out, are economic, political and cultural (1993: 94). Despite attempts to minimise the power discrepancies between the researcher and the researched through feminist empathies and friendly methods, I concur with Patai (1991) and Wolf (1996) that the research process is inherently 'unequal' for the researcher is always able to physically (even if not psychologically) leave 'the field'.

CHAPTER 4
SUDAN, WARS AND DISPLACEMENTS: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The rationale for this study on conflict-induced displacement and Nuer gender relations is linked to the social changes brought about by the civil conflicts that tore southern Sudan apart since 1983. It follows the change in social relations prompted by colonisation, state creation and previous civil wars. The recent conflicts caused massive displacement and migration of southern Sudanese, including the Nuer, to other regions and continents (see chapter 5). While the scale and the composition of this migration are unique in the history of southern Sudanese and the Nuer in particular, migration has been a constant feature of their lives.

To understand the current unprecedented forced displacement, change or *gɛɛr ro* (see chapter 2) and the transformations in social relations that it sparked and the meanings that the Nuer themselves attached to their experiences of displacement and settling-in after 'return', it is necessary to study history. Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo (1989) stress the broader context of refugee-producing conflicts beyond internal confrontation as linked to local, regional and global economic, political, social and historical processes. Thus, the historical narratives of social life and change by Nuer refugees, returnees and those who stayed behind in Sudan need to be analysed in this wider spectrum, to render what Malkki (1995a) calls their "mythico-history", comprehensive and meaningful.

Interpretation and making of history is part of nation-building, or in Benedict Anderson's words, an essential element of "imagined communities" (1983). Representations and reinterpretations of history in Sudan and elsewhere are linked to wider political agendas (see Shandy 2007: 22). Since knowledge is not only situated but also politicised, the histories of wars are rarely transparent and often contested. As John Garang, the late Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) leader, argued "any struggle must be anchored in history".[46] However, which 'history' is 'true'? In the case of Sudan, the struggle for dominant 'truthful' discourse about 'the root causes of the

[46] John Garang (2002) quoted in Johnson (2006: xiv).

conflict' is coloured by religious, ethnic, cultural, economic and geopolitical overtones. Members of the Sudanese government, rebel movement, dissident groups, and others continue to debate the principal causes of the conflict (e.g. Alier 1992; Nyaba 1997; Karadawi 1999; Arop 2006; Duany 1992). Clearly, such a politicised environment makes non-partisan and non-political research challenging (James 1991, 2009; Shandy 2007; Kani Edwards 2007).

The historical context is, however, pivotal to understanding both the underlying dynamics of displacement and changes in social, particularly gender, relations. I concur with Malkki's concern to highlight the particular historical context in constructing "refugees" (1995a). The aim of this thesis is to set the discussion of change in gender relations in the broader spatial and temporal context of Nuer (forced) migration. As many other authors have discovered (see Karadawi 1999; Shandy 2007; Lubkemann 2008; James 2009), gaining a clear understanding of the conflicting and contradictory conditions precipitating conflict and displacement is a balancing act between different, partial and imagined 'truths'.

This chapter situates the history of the 'south' within Sudan and the history of tensions between the 'north' and the 'south' which underpin the most recent wars. The first part situates the Nuer within the socio-geopolitical landscape of the 'south' and examines the colonial and post-colonial state-building project in Sudan and the dominance of the 'north' over the 'south'. This background helps explain the tensions that led to the eruption of the 1983 conflict. The second part of the chapter traces the emergence and direct causes of the second civil war (1983-2005), including the Khartoum - SPLA war (the *koor kume* - government war) and the inter- and intra-community violence that erupted among the southern Sudanese (1991-1999). The third section provides a background for and situates the transformations of the Nuer gender relations within the wider historical context.

1. SITUATING THE SOUTH IN SUDAN: HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WARS, DISPLACEMENT AND EMPLACEMENT

1.1. Politics of place: 'The Sudans'

In the preface to the third edition of *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* Douglas Johnson points out that at the onset of the twenty first century Sudan was "mired not in one, but many civil wars" (2006: xi). He emphasises that "the conflict between the northern and southern Sudan has usually been misunderstood" due to the misrepresentation of its historical causes (ibid: 1). The roots and consequences of the wars have been subject to numerous interrogations (e.g., Arop 2006; Burr and Collins 1995; Deng 1995; Johnson 2006; Jok 2001; Jok and Hutchinson 1999; Holt and Daly 2000; Kani Edwards 2007; Lesch 1998; Nyaba 1997). According to Johnson (2006) and Kani Edwards (2007), there are two opposite explanations which dominate discourse around 'root causes'. Some authors associate recent civil conflict in Sudan with the north-south division based on centuries of slavery, exploitation and racial discrimination by the 'Arab' north against the 'African' south (Albino 1970; Wai 1981; Kulusika 1998; Deng 1995; Jok 2001). Others see the underlying causes in the legacy of colonial rule which split the country and ensured economic development of the north (see G.M. Hamid 1996; O.M. Bashir 1984; Holt and Daly 2000). British 'divide and rule' is perceived as a contributing factor widening the division between the north and the south and enshrining southern underdevelopment (Bashir 1984). In addition, some see Islam as having unified the north while the south remained vulnerable in its cultural diversity.

The recent 22-year long conflict, whose effects are the focus of this thesis, has been often described as north versus south, with the six northern regions – Khartoum, Darfur, Northern, Eastern, Blue Nile and Kordofan – against three southern regions – Bahr al-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Equatoria.[47] Sudan, a colonial construct, the continent's largest country (over two million square kilometres) a highly diverse multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-ideological nation is often referred to as a

[47] Administratively, Sudan is divided into regions and states. At present, Sudan's administrative structure is based on the 1994 constitutional decree which organised its territory into 26 states, with ten located in the south (see Shandy 2007: 23).

microcosm of Africa (Voll and Voll 1985). Located at the crossroads of Africa, it borders Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya and Egypt. According to the 2008 census, there are an estimated 40 million people living in Sudan.[48] Arabic and Dinka are the two dominant languages, with an additional 14 minor languages divided into some 100 dialects. English is emerging as an official language of southern Sudan. Southern Sudan, more ethnically and linguistically diverse then the north,[49] contains a third of Sudan's population and a quarter of its territory (Johnson 2006: 1). Predominantly agriculturalist groups reside in Equatoria and parts of Bahr al-Ghazal region, while Nilotic agro-pastoralist peoples inhabit the Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal regions (Kani Edwards 2007: 18). The two largest groups in the south are the Nilotic Dinka and Nuer.[50]

Southern Sudan is often referred to as 'black', 'African' and adhering to indigenous religions or, as Hutchinson argues (1999) increasingly 'Christian,' while the northern part is described as 'Arab' and 'Muslim'. Such classifications are often misguided, and obfuscating more complex politico-cultural characteristics of Sudanese diversity.[51] They lead to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the causes of civil strife, depicting a supposedly homogenous north determined to subjugate and Islamicise the blacks (Kani Edwards 2007: 21; Jok 2001). Human rights groups, journalists and humanitarian workers often perpetrate this artificial divide as they seek to rationalise their interventions and pursue what they perceive to be 'justice' (see Duffield 2008; Johnson 2006: xii; Tvedt 1998). Such divisions gloss over multi-layered political, economic, social and historical processes that led to the emergence of intractable

[48] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/su.html.

[49] There are approximately two hundred northern ethnic groups categorised into five major groupings: Nubians, Beja, Afro-Arabs, Nubans, and Furs and fifty ethnic groups among the southerners. Pitya (1996: 255) categorises southern groups as follows: the Nilotic group (Dinka, Nuer); Luo group (Acholi, Anywak, Boor, Jur, Pari' Lokoro, Shatt, Shilluk); Nilo-Hamatic group (Bari, Lotuho, Toposa); southern Sudanic group (Moru, Madi, Avukaya, Mundo, Kaliko, Lugwara, Baka, Bongo); western Sudanic group (Ndogo, Bviri, Bai, Golo, Yulu, Kresh, Feroge, Bandala, and others of western Bahr al-Ghazal and southern Darfur); northern Sudanic (Didinga, Longarim [Buy], Murle, and other small groups of the Nuba Mountains); and Azande and Makarara, which are considered more Bantu than Sudanic.

[50] Tribe is mainly an administrative term representing the largest unit of political combination of smaller, affiliated sections. Nuer and Dinka are considered as peoples, comprising several tribes within each people, often governed by different organising principles (Johnson 2006: xiv-xv).

[51] For example, animism, according to Johnson has little descriptive value for southern Sudanese. It signifies a belief in a natural world governed by supernatural powers. Southern Sudanese adhere to theistic religions (2006: xv-xvi), and partly as a result of the recent civil conflict, have been increasingly converted to Christianity (Hutchinson 1996; Johnson 2006; Rolandsen 2005).

conflicts. Such framing of the conflict "creates a false impression that geography and politics are coterminous in Sudan" (Shandy 2007: 23). These divisions, however, cut across geographical, ethnic, religious and political axes. For example, Francis Deng (1972) – a respected Sudanese statesman, diplomat, scholar and former UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons - notes that although the Ngok Dinka are associated with the south, they in fact are located within the northern region of Kordofan and developed positive relations with their 'Arab' neighbours. The support of the Nuba Mountains people for SPLA, the southern rebel organisation (ICG 2002), the emergence of 'south-south' conflict, intra-ethnic violence (among and between Nuer, Dinka and others) and more recent conflict in Darfur also refute the view of a unified north or south (see Human Rights Watch 1994; Hutchinson 2000; Jok and Hutchinson 1999; de Waal 2005).

The complexity of Sudan's history, its socio-cultural composition and its economic and geopolitical location do not lend themselves to simple racial, ethnic, cultural or religious explanations of the north-south conflict. I concur with Amani El Jack, who in her study on the gender dimension of development-induced displacement in Sudan argues that "not only did these religio-cultural portrayals often elide complex histories and ignore local political-cultural constructions about, nation, identity, space and resources (see Katz 2001), they also remain fundamentally masculinist, hiding complex gender relationships and exclusions" (2007: 7). The interplay of the local, regional, national and global dimensions of the conflict together with its social, economic and political roots requires a more in-depth investigation into the historical nation-building project. Before engaging with the historical debate, I first locate the Nuer within the history of the 'south'.

1.2. Locating the Nuer narratives

Nuer women and men whom I encountered in Kakuma and later in southern Sudan were proud of their history and background. As a male elder in Ler told me:

> It was *kuoth* [Divinity] who created different people: *khaway* [white foreigners], Kenyans, Dinka and Nuer. Each people had their own language. *Kuoth* gave us the name *nuäri* [Nuer], "you are *nei ti naath*, the people of the people'. *Nuäri* were put in charge of all the creations of god: sea, land, cows and donkeys.

The Nuer, a Nilotic people and the second largest ethnic group in southern Sudan, inhabit the Upper Nile region. Culturally, linguistically and physically, they are considered similar to the Dinka (*Jieng*). In 1930 Evans-Pritchard carried out his fieldwork in Nuerland (*r<u>oo</u>l Nuärä*) (1940, 1951, 1956) producing a celebrated three-volume ethnography, *The Nuer*, which has been both praised and criticised. Audrey Richards (1941) described it as "an unsatisfying, brilliant, and utterly irritating book" (quoted in McKinnon 2000: 35). Some have criticised his ethnographic approach and rhetorical flourishes (Clifford 1988; Geertz 1988; Rosaldo 1986; James 1973, 1979), while others have been concerned with the relation between empirical data and his analytical models (Evens 1984; Glickman 1971; Gough 1971; Kelly 1977; Richards 1941; Verdon 1980; Hutchinson 1985, 1996; McKinnon 2000). Yet others have accused Evans-Pritchard of ignoring the political context in which he carried out his fieldwork and being overly close to the colonial authorities (James 1973). Evans-Pritchard work also suffered from its gender bias, with preference given to the representations of the Nuer society through the men's perspective. While Hutchinson corrected this male bias (Elson 1991) to some extent, my research privileges views of women and men as well as old and young.

At the time of Evans-Pritchard fieldwork, it was estimated there were 220,000 Nuer.[52] Predominantly engaged in an agro-pastoralist economy centred on sorghum, cattle herding and fishing (Hutchinson 1996: 22), seasonal migration was an enduring feature of their lives as they moved with cattle between relatively permanent, wet-season settlements and more densely populated temporary, dry-season cattle and fishing camps along the upper reaches of the White Nile. In the 1980s, cattle migrations have been coupled with migration for labour and trade as livelihood portfolios have broadened (see Hutchinson 1996). Although the urban-rural divide among participants in my research was salient, even those Nuer who migrated to towns maintained strong connections to their villages and effectively establish several 'homes' in multiple locations.[53] This is similar to the Nuer residing in the United States among whom Diana Shandy carried out research. She argues that among her respondents even educated professionals, who before leaving Sudan resided in towns, cultivated land,

[52] These were probably under-estimates. By the 1980s, official statistics estimated the Nuer population at at least 800,000 and probably over a million (Hutchinson 1996: 26).
[53] As polygamists, Nuer marry several wives if they have the means.

fished and bred cattle in their villages (2007: 30). The war-induced displacement and subsequent 'return' of the Nuer to their villages in Nuerland was not necessarily the beginning or the end of 'migration', but one of a number of movements (see chapters 2 and 7).

As Evans-Pritchard noted, Nuer lacked central administration, but were organised into segmentary lineages (1940: 5). He argued that they were a profoundly patrilineal and egalitarian people, without indigenous 'chiefs' or 'kings'. Most critics argue that his depiction of Nuer patrilineality is untenable given the complexity of Nuer social systems (Evens 1984; Glickman 1971; Gough 1971; Hutchinson 1985, 1996; Kelly 1977; McKinnon 2000; Richards 1941; Verdon 1980). The idea of equality and hierarchy among the Nuer is not simply based on economic and material differences and "the power to coerce", as stressed by Evans-Pritchard. As McKinnon shows, it rather concerns "relative status determined in accordance with culturally specific criteria of differential valuation, including religious, political and kinship elements" (2000: 37). Since Evans-Pritchard suppressed the political and religious aspect of power relations among the Nuer, he missed the central importance of hierarchy in Nuer political life (McKinnon 2000).

Characterising the Nuer as egalitarian has been challenged.[54] McKinnon asserts that "[A]t every moment, the patrinileal/patrilocal model appears to be contradicted and complicated by modes of affiliation and attachment that are anything but patrilineal and by modes of residence that are hardly patrilocal" (2000: 36). McKinnon[55] demonstrates that patrilineality became visible among the Nuer only in the context of marriage and religion, although they were excluded from the 'public' and political system designed by Evans-Pritchard (2000: 45). These complex modes of affiliation were also visible among my respondents. Women born into politically powerful families despite the

[54] The social organisation of the Nuer is based on four terms: *buth*, *mar*, *thok dwiel* and *cieng*. *Buth* (sharing of sacrificial meat) is translated by Evans-Pritchard as relations that link lineage groups through ties of agnation (1940a: 193-194). *Mar* (literally means 'my mother') signifies relations that link individuals through ties of marriage and bilateral kinship (1940a: 193-194; 1951: 6-7). *Thok mac* – called by the Nuer as "the doorway to the hearth" or "the entrance to the hut" (*thok dwiel*) - is referred to by Evans-Pritchard as lineage (1940a: 195; 1951:6). *Cieng* literally meaning 'home' or 'community' (Kiggen 1948: 57) is translated as a tribal territorial section, "homestead, hamlet, village and tribal sections of various dimensions" (Evans-Pritchard 1940a: 136).

[55] She proposes *cieng* as a primary unit of organisation accommodating matrilineal and patrilineal elements.

change of their residence after marriage maintained strong links and benefitted from the support of their fathers. Nyayena, a returnee young wife in Ler received support from the Ler commissioner as she was a daughter of a powerful trader in the area. Her mother who came from an 'aristocratic' lineage yielded substantial power in the community. She was appointed as a women's representative for the local SPLM branch and participated in the political campaign taking place during my stay in Ler.

Nuer acephalous (or 'stateless') organisation was based on kinship and residency affiliations affirmed through mutual obligations "to combine in warfare against outsiders and acknowledge the rights of their members to compensation for injury" (ibid). They were divided into eleven loose major territorially-bound groupings: Bul, Leek [Leeɣ], western Jikany [Jikäny ciëŋ], Nyuong [Nyuoŋ], Dok, Jagei [Jagɛi], Gaawär, Thiäng [Thiäŋ], Lak [Laak], Lou and eastern Jikany Nuer [Jikäny door]. Hutchinson shows some of the linguistic, cultural, social, ecological and political differences between the eastern and the western Nuer (1996: 37). My own research among the eastern and western Nuer refugees in Kakuma concurs with Hutchinson's observations that contemporary 'easterners' see themselves as more open and adaptable, and hence, in their words, more 'modern' than their western cousins.[56] Although these distinctions are important in understanding the transformations of social and in particular gender relations, in my thesis I focus mainly on the impact of forced displacement and return among the western Nuer, and especially the Dok, Jagei and Nyuong groupings.[57] As the quotation at the beginning of the section from a male elder suggests, Nuer images of themselves as distinct people (*nei ti naath*) with a unique language (*thok*) and culture (*ciaŋ,* pl. *cieŋ*) became even stronger in the context of civil wars and life in refugee camps (see chapter 6).

Much of the social organisation suggested by Evans-Pritchard has been transformed throughout the 20th century (see section 3) due to colonialism, education, encroaching

[56] The eastern and western Nuer respondents in Kakuma stressed that the Nuer originated from the west, and in the 19th century migrated to the east. They agued, the western Nuer are the 'real Nuer', whereas the easterners "got mixed up with Dinka and Anuak" (see also Duany 1992: 28). Their lifestyles also changed due to contacts with British colonisers and subsequently with international humanitarian workers. Hence, they are considered more 'open' to change. See Hutchinson for further discussion (1996: 37).

[57] Although in Kakuma I worked with eastern and western Nuer, during my fieldwork in southern Sudan I concentrated on the latter.

of a government and Christianity. The recent conflicts further transformed the Nuer social structures, as it will be shown in the following chapters.

1.3. From pre-colonial statehoods to post-colonial Sudan's independence

Current conflicts cannot be understood without knowledge of Sudan's pre-colonial history (see Lesch 1998; Burr and Collins 1995; Johnson 1994, 2006; Kelly 1985; Pitya 1996). As with Hutu-Tutsi narratives in the Burundian conflict studied by Malkki (1995a), the dominant southern narratives centre around autochthony of southerners and their claims to territory while depicting northern Muslims as migrants (Pitya 1996; Shandy 2007). This view was often shared by the Nuer research participants.

Sudanese history is often analysed in terms of confrontation with external forces. The pre-colonial times can be divided into four periods: the ancient Christian and Nubian (3200BC – 1500 AD); the Muslim (1500-1821); the period of Ottoman control known as the Turkiyya (1821-85); and the Mahdiya (1885-98). The origins of Sudan date back to ancient times when the Nubian region of today's northern Sudan was home to Kushite Kingdoms (2700 BC – 300 AD) who had close cultural, economic and military ties to Pharaonic Egypt (Holt & Daly 2000).[58]

Johnson notes that "the development of states has been the most consistent influence on the definition of economic, political, and ultimately social relations within the Sudan" (2006: 2). Until the Turco-Egyptian invasion, contact with powers to the states in the north was defined by their reliance on manpower, food and resources. States launched waves of lucrative predatory expeditions to capture slaves, cattle, ivory and gold (Rolandsen 2005: 23; Johnson 2006: 2-4). The Turco-Egyptian invasion of Sudan in 1820 changed the balance between the different Sudanic states and their loose coexistence with their southern peripheries. Demand for slaves and tribute and the power of the Egyptian state led to expeditions penetrating the unexplored Upper Nile basin (Jok 2001; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989: 50; Pitya 1996). Johnson notes that this period of commercial exploitation of the south by Egyptians, European and Sudanese merchants and adventurers marked the beginning of Sudan's north-south

[58] Rolandsen mentions that the notion of Christian heritage has been used as propaganda in the SPLM/A first draft constitution (2005: 23, footnote 26).

divide (2006: 4).[59]

The emergence of the Mahdist state in 1883 ended Ottoman-Egyptian rule. Pitya portrays the Mahdiya as an era when southerners fought alongside the Mahdists "to regain their freedom" from Ottoman rule (1996: 48). The Mahdists eventually lost control of the south. External control was consolidated following the British invasion of Sudan in 1898 and establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (Johnson 2006: 9-19).

Anglo-Egyptian rule (1898-1956) strengthened the regional division between the north and the south, following an explicit "active policy of differentiation" (Rolandsen 2005: 23). In the north, Egypt relied on disaffected sections of the Sudanese Muslim population and secured influence by replacing Mahdists with pliant tribal leaders and recruiting northern Sudanese into the army and police (Johnson 2006: 9). In the south, the pattern of government was different as the Anglo-Egyptian condominium did not have to win people over. Britain, however, was concerned to secure territorial borders and to force into submission those who were previously beyond central governmental control. Upon signing the condominium arrangement, a systematic process of 'pacification' took place to, as Shandy notes, "subjugate the eastern, western, and southern areas that had not yet been subject to European occupation" (2007: 33). Johnson (1994) describes some of the efforts to suppress the leadership of the Nuer prophets.

In the aftermath of the World War I, Christian missionaries expanded and consolidated their evangelical activity in the south (Pitya 1996). In 1928, Britain took a step to crash the southern resistance against the British that persisted throughout the interwar period. As Wendy James describes, the aerial bombing of a Nuer village put an end to anti-British uprisings among "the last indigenous people in British Africa to be conquered by force of arms" (1990). This is when Evans-Pritchard started his fieldwork among the Nuer.

[59] The slave trade peaked in the early 1870s, before Egypt succumbed to international pressure to suppress it. As most slaves originated from the interior of Sudan, 'slave' became synonymous with 'black' and this discrimination based on skin colour continues until now (see Jok 2001; Johnson 2006). On slavery in Egypt and Sudan, see e.g. Jok 2001; Sikainga 1996; Tucker 1986.

These events were the beginning of what was generally called 'indirect rule' elsewhere in Africa but in Sudan was dubbed 'Native Administration' (Johnson 2006: 11). Rule was implemented through indigenous structures, local customary rights and norms. The colonialists sought to provide "moral guidance" through mission education and a series of anti-Islamic policies (Lesch 1998:31). The Closed District Ordinance and the Permits to Trade Ordinance, introduced in 1922 and 1925 respectively (Bashir 1984; Wai 1981) were designed to restrict the movement of northerners' and their trade in the south in order to supposedly "protect the Southerners from the perceived threat of cultural dominance" (Rolandsen 2005: 24; Lesch 1998). As Johnson points out, the Southern Policy of 1930 was to eventual secure the future of the southern Sudan as part of the British East African colonies (2004:11).

This system of governance was maintained throughout the Anglo-Egyptian condominium as a cost-efficient method to supposedly preserve 'natural' societies. Schechter notes that it "further entrenched Islam and Arabism in the North and developed the South through affirmation of its indigenous, African background and strategic exposure of its population to Christianity, the English language and legal traditions under the direction of a strong missionary presence" (2004: 69; ICG 2002).[60]

Britain not only imposed different governance systems in the north and south but established various administrative structures in the south (Johnson 1994; 2006: 12; Hutchison 1996). This was supposedly to reflect indigenous community structures and to accommodate the geographical dispersal of the groups as well as difficult access for the central administrators to some of the areas. For pastoralists in the central plains of Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal, government-installed chiefs and courts were empowered to deal with cattle cases and collect taxes. The sedentary agricultural communities of Equatoria and parts of Bahr al-Ghazal were accessible to administrators throughout the year and had permanent, more powerful executive structures. Unequal distribution of educational facilities, uneven incorporation of educated officials into administrative structures (Johnson 2006: 18) and Christian proselytising (Hutchinson 1996) increased differences between southerners. In effect, Britain laid the foundation for the post 2005 administrative structures of the new

[60] For further discussion of Britain's Southern Policy, see Lesch (1988), Holy and Dale (2000) and Johnson (2006).

autonomous government, the basis of the internal disparities now destabilising southern Sudan.

When on January 1, 1956 Sudan became the first of Britain's African colonies to be granted independence the civil war was already underway following the mutiny of southern Sudanese soldiers in the Equatorian Corps in Torit in 1955 (Arop 2006; Rolandsen 2005; Johnson 2006: 29). The rebellion was sparked by southern dissatisfaction with the decolonisation process, Britain's rejection of southern self-administration and southern leaders' fears that the British would hand over the reins of government to northerners.

The conflict escalated in 1958 after a military coup. General Ibrahim Aboud embarked on a policy of Arabisation and Islamisation in the south. Escalating expulsion of missionaries intensified conversions and furthered the spread of Christianity (Johnson 2006: 310).[61] Growing repression forced many southern students and prominent political figures into the bush. The Sudan African Nationalist Union was created (see Alier 1992) and a guerrilla group was formed which became known as *Anyanya* – a type of poison. Internal struggles undermined their initial military successes. Joseph Lagu managed to unite some influential *Anyanya* commanders and in February 1972 signed the Addis Ababa peace agreement with the newly established military regime of Jafar Nimeri.[62] It stipulated a substantial degree of southern self-rule and control over natural resources (Shandy 2007: 34; Johnson 2006:39-58; Rolandsen 2005:25-26).

The 1955-1972 war produced the first outflow of southern Sudanese refugees, with politicians, students, civil servants and farmers fleeing to neighbouring countries (Abusharaf 2002; Pitya 1996: 54; Akol 1994; Karadawi 1999). In 1972, prior to the first repatriation and return of southern Sudanese refugees, it was estimated that some 220,000 lived abroad (Akol 1994: 81). The Sudanese government relied on international organisations to bring 'home' the displaced. An estimated one million lives were lost as a result of the conflict (ibid: 78-80).

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[61] Christian missionaries were expelled in 1964 (Pitya 1996; Hutchinson 1996; Shandy 2007: 34). Wendy James notes that this prompted conversions to local evangelical churches in the Blue Nile region (1999: 241-52).

[62] Nimeri came to power in 1969 through a military coup.

The narratives of displacement, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, were pervasive in the life stories of the Nuer in Kakuma and those who stayed behind in Sudan. Some of the elders recounted their numerous displacements, starting from the *Anyanya* war. An elderly man from Ler, a former teacher and Presbyterian pastor, recalled trekking in 1958 with his wife and two small children in search of refuge in Uganda. He became displaced again when eleven years of peace ended and the civil war resumed in 1983, starting a process which slowly escalated from north-south conflict to include episodic violence between southerners.

2. SECOND CIVIL WAR: OIL, GUNS, THE STATE AND THE WAR OF THE 'EDUCATED'

Although the second civil war (1983-2005) was a continuation and a result of the previous conflict, the scale and character of the conflict were different. The struggle for control of natural resources (particularly oil), the use of modern technology, the state's[63] unprecedented disregard for human rights and Khartoum's instigation of southern violence by proxy forces serving its interests marked a rupture from previous north-south skirmishes. Inter-community violence took on a new ethnicised language that until the 1991 SPLA split was absent from the local Nuer-Dinka fighting.

2.1.Khartoum-SPLA war: oil as a curse

> […] in contemporary post-Cold War conflicts economics is increasingly replacing ideology as the motive or legitimizing force for conflict. Such conflicts do not so much represent the continuation of politics by other means as the continuation of business by other means. (Cooper 2002: 942)

Hutchinson (1999), Shandy (2007), El Jack (2007) and Moro (2008), as well as many of the research participants, located the sources of the war in contestation around three strategic resources: oil located mainly in Upper Nile and Jongolei provinces; gold found in Equatoria; and the waters of the White Nile, the source of life for most Sudanese.[64] Control of these resources hinges around geographical boundaries. Political contestations and definitions of what constitutes 'the north' and 'the south' have been, and remain, at the core of the conflict.

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[63] I use 'state' to denote the institutions of the government in Khartoum. Officially, Sudan is still considered a unitary country.

[64] Shandy adds religion as an ideological force in the north-south struggle (2007: 31).

Under the terms of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement which ended the first civil war (see above) development of the south was declared a priority. Regional autonomy for southern Sudan was cemented by creation of its own parliament in 1972 (Rolandsen 2005: 25). However, southern autonomy was to prove theoretical and by the end of the 11-year long interwar period most southerners perceived the agreement as a failure (Johnson 2006: 39). Instead, regional politics and development continued to be manipulated by the north. Digging of the Jongolei Canal to divert the Nile was perceived by southerners as solely benefitting the north. Failure to incorporate former *Anyanya* fighters into the national army intensified disaffection among the ex-guerrillas. Many who refused integration returned to exile in Ethiopia (Alier 1992; Johnson 2006: 41) and were to play a key role in the second civil war. The south had no autonomy in designing its own economic or education policies and it became affected by the failure of the Khartoum government's mechanised-agriculture-driven 'bread basket' strategy in the north, which led to escalating indebtedness of the whole country. This coincided with the discovery of oil in the south, particularly in Upper Nile region. Given the limited natural resources located in the north, the Khartoum government could not afford to lose (economic) control over the south. Hence, it transferred refining capacity from the south to the northern city of Port Sudan (Hutchison 1996: 3-4; Shandy 2007: 35; HRW 2003). The southern regional government was not included in concession negotiations between the Khartoum government and Chevron and Total (Johnson 2006: 45). Nuer women and men in Kakuma and Nuerland stressed the role of oil and foreign companies in fuelling the war. They often referred to oil as a curse. The comment of Thot Louny, an elder in Piliny, was typical:

> *Te kaamdung ke coaa*[65] [the bone between us, the Nuer and the Arabs] brought destruction to the country. The Arabs were treating the Nuer badly and stealing their properties and their wives. They saw that the Nuer were rich and wanted to take the resources away from them. They also discovered oil and started taking it out secretly of Nuerland. Oil was in Jagei and in Jikany [areas in Western Upper

[65] The metaphor of the bone is used by the Nuer to describe permanent relationship of hostility based on homicide. In the Nuer understanding, the bones of the slain create deep rifts between communities precluding sexuality, commensality and intermarriage. Here, it is used both to describe the war-induced homicide by the Arabs as well as the inter- and intra-community violence among the southerners (see Evans-Pritchard 1956; Hutchinson 1996, 1998).

> Nile]. This started in the 1990s. The Arabs knew about the oil from the white people.

Hutchison suggests other pivotal issues contributing to the collapse of the uneasy north-south peace. The north sought to redefine administrative borders[66] and in 1980 the new National Assembly included oilfields around Bentiu and the rich agricultural areas of Upper Nile in the northern provinces (2006: 45). The north further undermined southern interests by attempting to re-divide the south into three autonomous regions, which would undermine the southern economic and political position (Hutchinson 1996: 3-4). Thousands of southern labour migrants were arrested and expelled from Khartoum. Continued actions of Khartoum to control, subjugate and exploit the south nullified the Addis Ababa agreement.[67] The final straw was imposition in 1983 of *shari'a* (Muslim) law in the south.

The 1983 mutiny of the Bor Garrison which triggered other mutinies, is considered as the beginning of the second civil war. Some 2,500 soldiers defected to Ethiopia and joined the former *Anyanya* fighters (Johnson 2006: 62). The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement was created (SPLM) together with its military wing, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and John Garang[68] became its leader.

The conflict became intertwined with the Cold War and international politics. Since 1976 the Ethiopian regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam had actively supported the SPLA with both weaponry and training camps in Ethiopia (Arop 2006; Alier 1992; Johnson

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[66] Border areas adjacent to the southern region became contested. According to the Addis Ababa agreement, the mineral-rich areas of Kafia Kingi and Hofrat al-Nahas were supposed to be returned to Bahr al-Ghazal by 1977, but instead remained with Darfur. In the Dinka districts of Abyei in Southern Kordofan as well as in the Chali area of the Blue Nile province agreed referenda never took place. In the late 1970s Arab armed militias (Misiriyya) started attacking Dinka villages in order to drive the population out of the area into Bahr al-Ghazal (see Jok 2001; Johnson 2006).

[67] Although national institutions failed to advance southern autonomy, western governments using international aid agencies as proxies showered Khartoum, and indirectly the south, with development assistance. NGOs became substitutes for government services, providing education, health services and large-scale agricultural projects (see Rolandsen 2005; Johnson 2006). This tendency to transfer responsibility to NGOs not only undermined the credibility of the southern regional administration but also created an unfortunate precedent affecting the current post-war (re)construction.

[68] John Garang, a Twic Dinka from Kongor in Bor was educated in the USA, graduating with a B.A. from Grinnell College and a Ph.D in agricultural economics from Iowa State. Many young Sudanese men both in refugee camps in Kakuma and in Sudan expressed interest in studying in the USA and talked about the need to acquire education in order to benefit South Sudan, as Dr. Garang had.

2006; Rolandsen 2006; Berger forthcoming).[69] This was partly to undermine the position of the Khartoum government, which hosted hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian refugees driven abroad by the policies of the 1974-1991 Mengistu's derg regime and/or the 1984-1985 drought (Schechter 2004: 73).[70] Israel and Libya also offered (albeit briefly) military support to the southern rebels. Meanwhile, the SPLA's reliance on the Soviet-backed Ethiopian government was cited in Washington as justification to provide military support to Khartoum (Hutchinson 1996; Burr and Collins 1995; Johnson 2006).

In 1985, the regime of Jaafer Nimeiri was overthrown in a military coup and Sadiq al-Mahdi was subsequently elected Sudanese prime minister. Another coup followed in 1989, this time bringing to power the National Islamic Front (NIF) led by Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir who has remained in power ever since. Discontent and opposition to radical policies promoted by the new rulers led to formation of the National Democratic Alliance. Al-Bashir responded by suspending the constitution and dissolving political parties, trade unions and civil associations. As Deng notes in his study of internal displacement in Sudan (1993), al-Bashir's rule resorted to routine torture, detentions and extrajudicial killings.[71]

2.2.Changing conflict: south-south war of the 'educated' (men)

The Khartoum-SPLA war changed its dynamic in 1991 after the SPLA split which tore apart southern communities (see below).[72] The Khartoum government until then had been unsuccessful in securing control over the oil rich areas of Western Upper Nile and gaining a decisive military advantage. The event that changed the course of the war and the experience of displacement for the western Nuer was the split that occurred in late August 1991 among SPLA commanders. This launched a new war: 'the war of the educated [elite]' (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 131). In the Upper Nile town of Nasir,

[69] The Ethiopian government provided support to the southern rebels in retaliation for Nimeiri's support for the separatist Eritrean movement. Mengistu not only provided safe havens for the southern guerrillas, exiles and refugees, but also actively armed and trained SPLA troops (see Berger forthcoming).
[70] By 1988, Sudan hosted 677,000 Ethiopian refugees, the bulk of whom returned to Ethiopia following the collapse of the Mengistu regime in 1991. For discussion of Sudanese policy on Ethiopian refugees see Karadawi (1999).
[71] See also Burr and Collins 1995; Human Rights Watch 1994, 1996.
[72] See Johnson (2006: 79-126), Rolandsen (2005) and Lobban, Kramer, and Fluehr-Lobban (2002: liv-lxxiv) for a detailed discussion of the transformations within SPLA.

Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon,[73] Nuer and a zonal commander of Western Upper Nile, together with former Nuer *Anyanya II* member Gordon Kong Cuol and Shilluk commander Lam Akol, staged a coup against John Garang and formed what became known as the Nasir faction of the SPLA (Nyaba 1997; Lesch 1998; Johnson 1998: 63; 2006: 97; Jok and Hutchinson 1999; Rolandsen 2006: 35; Arop 2006: 272).[74] They protested John Garang's 'dictatorial' leadership and demanded independence for southern Sudan (Prunier c. in Rolandsen 2005). This was a departure from Garang's policy of seeking regional autonomy within a united Sudan. Initial conflicts between opposed national visions of southern Sudan's future quickly gave way to a drive for self-preservation. The two leaders reached for the 'ethnic card,' with Machar protesting against alleged Dinka dominance of the SPLM/A.[75] Critics argued that John Garang and the SPLA's Dinka leadership were favouring Dinka interests to the detriment of other southern communities. A number of authors agree that ethnicity, development inequalities and unequal access to power were used by the coup leaders to mask their personal ambitions (Nyaba 1997; Jok and Hutchinson 1999; Hutchinson 2000b; Scroggins 2002; Shandy 2007). Nyaba (1997), a Machar ally who rejoined Garang after Machar's decision to start negotiations with Khartoum in 1996, provides a detailed account of the SPLA-spilt and missed opportunities for reconciliation. Shandy warns that this rift should not be seen simply in terms of Dinka-Nuer animosity (2007: 37), instead pointing to the leaders' personal interests and ambitions as fuelling the inter-ethnic violence which continued until 1999.[76] This aspect was also confirmed by research participants.

By 1992 the SPLA split had led to a new phase in the civil war between the two factions, resulting in an expanding confrontation and a 'regional subculture of

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[73] Riek Machar was educated first in missionary schools in Ler, Western Upper Nile and later gained a university degree in Khartoum. Like John Garang, Riek received a scholarship to study abroad, first at Scotland's Strathclyde University, followed by a doctorate from Bradford Polytechnic. The Garang-Machar conflict is often referred to as war between 'two doctors' (Hutchinson 2000: 6). Riek Machar is considered by the Nuer as the chosen one predicted by Nundɛng, the most influential Nuer prophet, who was to bring peace and liberation to the Nuer.

[74] The SPLA Nasir or United faction changed its name several times due to defections and new alliances, in 1994 becoming the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM).

[75] Particularly the Twic Dinka from Kongor district near Bor, the group from which John Garang originated, were seen as controlling the movement (Prunier (forthcoming): 3, 7-10 in Rolandsen 2005: 35; Nyaba 1997; Johnson 2006: 65-66).

[76] Deborah Scroggings in *Emma's War* describes the marriage between Riek Machar and Emma McCune, a British humanitarian worker. She notes Riek's obsession with power and domination (2002: 170).

ethnicised violence' (Hutchinson 1999). This affected rural Nuer and Dinka communities whose homelands turned into battlefields (Hutchinson 2000b: 6). The SPLA-Mainstream or Torit faction was predominantly backed by Dinka (and Equatorians), while SPLA-United or Nasir attracted mainly Nuer supporters. As Jok and Hutchinson argue, Dinka (*Jieng*) and Nuer (*nei ti naath*), as the two largest ethnic groups, provided most of the guerilla recruits (1999:126). The south-south violence that ensued and continued for nearly a decade destroyed thousands of Dinka and Nuer communities throughout Western Upper Nile, Bahr al-Ghazal and Jongolei Provinces. According to Jok and Hutchinson, several months of fierce fighting resulted in some 70 percent of the Bor Dinka being displaced in the southern Upper Nile region and hundreds of civilians killed in the Bor massacre (1999:128; see also Hutchinson 2000; Human Rights Watch 1994:96-99).[77]

War along the Nuer-Dinka frontier, as Johnson notes, had a direct impact on security among the Nuer (2006: 117) as inter-community fighting broke out between the central Nuer communities (Lou and Gaawar and then between the Lou and Jikany). The most devastating inter-community violence took place in Western Upper Nile. Throughout the 1990s, the Khartoum government exploited southern divisions, manipulating grievances and tensions between different guerrilla groups and using 'divide and rule' tactics as part of a long-term strategy of waging proxy wars against the SPLA (Hutchinson and Jok 1999; Johnson 2006). Human Rights Watch report (2003) *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights* details the inter-fighting between western Nuer communities of Leek, Dok and Bul Nuer, which led to massive human rights abuses and resulted in much of the displacement and depopulation in the region. The Bul Nuer, under the command of Paulino Matip, were funded by the government of Khartoum and some oil companies operating in the area, including Canadian-owned Talisman, as part of a strategy to control oil resources.

Although historically Dinka and Nuer communities were engaged in conflicts, including the famous expansion of the Nuer eastwards that resulted in the assimilation

[77] The Bor massacre is considered by many Sudanese as a turning point in the ethnic confrontation. The attack of the Nuer-led forces, with the active participation of civilians under the leadership of one of the local chiefs, left thousands of Bor Dinka residents dead with the rest seeking refuge, many fleeing to Kakuma. The Dinka-Nuer tensions continued across the borders, with fierce fighting between the different groups in Kakuma. When asked about Dinka-Nuer relations, women and men in Kakuma always recalled the confrontation in 1996 that left several dead and many wounded.

of hundreds of Dinka and Anuak communities, the basis of their confrontation was economic (see Evans-Pritchard 1940; Gough 1971; Kelly 1985; Hutchinson 1996). Seasonal cattle raiding and competition over grazing land set *Jieng* and *nei ti naath* and different Nuer *cieng* against each other. However, these confrontations were different in scope and weaponry, combatants using spears and showing restraint by fighting according to community codes derived from the widespread fear of *nueer* (pollution). While stealing cattle and occasional kidnapping of women and children were widely practiced, intentional killing of women and children was strictly forbidden.

The older Nuer women and men argued that the new type of war that emerged between the Dinka and the Nuer after the 1991 split, and among the Nuer themselves, was "*different from the normal cattle wars between us*." The elderly in Ler and nearby villages described the war as "*the war of the educated children* (*koor gaan duël goära*)."[78] One of the Nuer chiefs of the Dok people in Ler, Kuong Mabiel explained how:

> In the past we would fight the Dinka, or other Nuer *cieng* over cattle or girls, but women were never killed. Now, it is the war of the gun and the educated, Garang and Machar, who are fighting for their own wealth and power. This was not our war; we do not understand the reasons for this war. We have nothing against the Dinka. We used to be one, *Jieng e nei ti naath raan kel*. We can only fight them when they steal our cows.

These views were shared by other Nuer women and men, who referred to the new dimension of the inter- and intra-ethnic conflict that swept through their lands as the worst experience of their lives. They all pointed out the personal greed and quest for power of the leaders as sources of the inter-community fighting, replacement of spears by guns and the new tactic of targetting women and children. An elderly woman chief from Padeh, Nyadak, commented:

> Brothers started killing each other, and this was because they wanted to have power and position. [Our] Children were killing women and old men, their own mothers and fathers, because they had guns and they thought that *kuoth* [God] does not see it. These children got educated and they think they know better [than us, the illiterate]. This was the worst fighting we ever experienced, when you see your own people killing themselves. Their brains were wasted for nothing.

[78] This metaphor refers to the leaders of the two opposing groups, John Garang and Riek Machar. As they both had university degrees they were perceived as the educated elite. Riek Machar did not have the Nuer sign of manhood, *gaar* (six parallel marks on the forehead), and hence was often perceived in the eyes of the elders as a 'boy' or 'child'.

To escape the killings and forced recruitment by different Nuer factions, many young Nuer men became refugees in Kakuma. Mayang, a 27-year-old Bul Nuer from Mayom, was forced to join the Bul Nuer militia under the command of Paulino Matip. When he was wounded in 1997, he was sent home to recover. He took this opportunity to escape to Kakuma:

> I did not want to be a soldier any more. I did not see a sense in killing my own brothers, raping women and girls, and burning my homeland's property. This was not my war any longer, and I was not going to lose my life and kill my own people in the name of the political power struggles between Garang and Machar. They send their children and wives out [abroad] to education and safety whereas they make us kill our sisters and brothers in the name of power. This is not what I believe in. This is the reason why I deserted. This war is against the Arabs, not against other Nuer, or against other southerners. We, as southerners, have to stand together, to fight our common enemy.

The number of deaths of Dinka and Nuer in the ensuing south-south violence exceeded the number of southerners killed in combat by the Sudanese army (Jok and Hutchinson 1999:127). Arop (2006), Daly and Sikainga (1993), Hutchinson (1996), Johnson (1998, 2006), Jok (1998), Jok and Hutchinson (1999), Nyaba (1997), Omaar and de Waal (1993) and Ruay (1994) have written extensively on these issues including the collaboration of Riek Machar with the Khartoum government. This, in turn, led to signing of a controversial Political Charter by Machar and Kerubino Bol with al-Bashir in 1996. In 1997, Riek Machar and others created a militia, the Southern Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) which was allied with the government. Machar was made chairman of the Southern States Coordination Council in Khartoum and promised a future referendum on the future of the unity of Sudan. Alienated from his old friends and supporters, eventually Machar split from Khartoum in 1999 and on January 8, 2002, reconciled with SPLA-Mainstream led by John Garang (Shandy 2007: 37). In the meantime, the 1998 Dinka and Nuer Peace Workshop held in Lokichoggio, Kenya, and the 1999 Wunlit Nuer-Dinka Peace conference were convened by communities to search for local reconciliation and to address some of the costs of the inter-ethnic violence (see Schechter 2004: 71).

2.3.From spears to guns and changing nature of violence

The spread of modern weaponry and war technology contributed to the change in the nature of the south-south violence. Guns, bombardments and heavy artillery were already used in the first civil war, but their usage was limited to the north-south confrontation, the war of the government (*koor kume*). As Hutchinson points during the 1956-1972 civil war the spread of guns was confined to parts of eastern Nuerland where it became the practice to include weapons in bridewealth payments (1996:151). Until the second civil war, the western Nuer had limited contact with guns and it was only after the 1991 SPLA split that advanced weaponry and small arms started being used in inter-community conflicts.

The impact of this new technology was devastating for the Nuer and Dinka communities in Western Upper Nile as the war of guns (*koor mac*) spawned uncontrollable violence. Access to guns was relatively easy, as they were supplied both by the SPLA[79] and the state. Khartoum provided AK-47s, PKM machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades not only to the Misseriya and Baggara Arab groups but also to their various client Nuer militias. This led to indiscriminate no-holds-barred attacks on unarmed Dinka and Nuer civilian populations.

The result of the proliferation of guns throughout the region endangered the fragile physical and livelihood security of the local population. As in other pastoralist communities in East Africa (see Markakis 1993; Mkutu 2008), guns started being used by the pastoralist communities in inter-community cattle raiding (McCullum and Okech 2008: 40). Easy access to guns made possible the emergence of wealth-hungry warlords who raided their own home areas, grabbing both cows and girls as property. A young Kakuma returnee man explained:

> The only people who benefited from *koor mac* [war of guns] are the big commanders. You see the compound of Tito Biel [SSIM Nuer commander in Ler]? He was one of the worst during the war. He stole cows, girls and forced women to be his wives. He has some 15 wives. The men who can afford to marry now [after the war] are the ones who had guns and stole a lot [during the war].

[79] The proliferation of arms in southern Sudan was largely a result of the north-south war. The SPLA and their supporting communities were given small arms by the Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean governments as well as diaspora groups (McCullum and Okech 2008: 40).

The new weaponry deployed in local conflicts aided the spiral of violence and prolonged confrontations which previously had lasted no longer than a few days (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 132). Now, as one of the research participants commented, "*war had no end*." Through distribution of guns to civilians, the SPLA, Riek Machar's SSIM and other Nuer breakaway warlords polarised and militarised the Nuer and Dinka. The local dispersed networks of civilian Nuer and Dinka youth, referred to among Dinka as *Titweng*, 'cattle guards', and as *Dec in boor*, 'White Army' among the Nuer, armed by the SPLA and SSIM respectively, terrorised local communities throughout the 1990s.[80] They proved difficult to control by the local chiefs and military leaders, and although a general disarmament was initiated in Sudan in 2005 they still operate (see Arnold and Alden 2007). During my stay in the region, several fights erupted among local youth in which guns were used. Occasionally, my drunkard neighbour, who had been recruited as a child by SPLA and later became a nurse with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), would fire his gun either to threaten his wife or the commissioner of Ler.

As in other recent intra-community conflicts – in the former Yugoslavia (Kaldor 2006, 2007), East Africa (Clapham 1998), Sierra Leone (Keen 2005), Guinea-Bissau (Vigh 2007), Liberia (Ellis 2001; Utas 2005a, 2005b), Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and Congo to name but a few – the new war technology combined with unchecked greed to create unprecedented violence which deeply impacted household and community life and had major implications gender relations (see chapter 5).[81]

The war was no longer between the northern-dominated government in Khartoum and the SPLA over the vision of Sudan, but had become a fragmented and anarchic conflict between and among southerners, directly played on the bodies of civilians. The state, Arab militias and proxy southern warlords moved towards unprecedented levels of brutality against citizens. They included: direct bombing of unarmed civilians, indiscriminate killings of unarmed civilians, kidnapping and enslavement of women, bombing of the UN feeding centre at Bieh (2002) and forced displacement of civilians.

[80] It is believed that some 20-30,000 youth were members of the White Army militias (see UNMIS UNMAC Brief 2006 quoted in Arnold and Alden 2007: 3).
[81] See Richards 2005a, Kurimoto and Simonse 1994, Fukui and Markakis 1994 for a discussion of the impact of guns on community life. This literature remains, however, gender-blind in its analysis.

The displacement of the Nuer and Dinka people from their lands was directly linked to the goal of expanding the oil pipeline to Adok, a Nuer port community on the White Nile (HRW 2003: 36; Hutchinson 2000: 7; El Jack 2007; Moro 2008). Between 1986-1991, the government strategy was to arm Baggara 'Arab' groups with AK-47s and encourage them to target Dinka and Nuer women and children. This strategy however failed to extend the government's control over the oil wealth. It was only the SPLA split which allowed Khartoum full control of oil production in the south (Hutchison 2000b: 6). New oil wealth enabled Khartoum to double its military expenditure (Schechter 2004: 71; HRW 2003). In September 1999 an 1,110 km pipeline – constructed by a consortium of Malaysian, Canadian, British, Argentine, German and Chinese companies aided by 20,000 Chinese labourers – became operational, carrying crude oil from Nuer areas of Western Upper Nile to refineries in the north. The pipeline allowed the government of Sudan to save $4.5 billion in oil import bills in 1999 alone (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 130). The government began using oil profits to obtain increasingly sophisticated weapons used to wage the war against the south (HRW 1999, 2000). The consequences of the war in Western Upper Nile will be discussed in chapter 5.

The second civil war in Sudan with its changing nature after the 1991 SPLA spilt is part of a wider phenomenon described by Mary Kaldor (2006) as 'new wars' in her ground-breaking analysis in *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era.* This book has fundamentally changed the way we understand contemporary war and conflict. Kaldor describes a new type of organised violence that developed in Africa and Eastern Europe (and elsewhere) as 'new wars'. She uses the term 'new' "to distinguish such wars from prevailing perceptions of war drawn from an earlier era" (2006: 1). The term 'war' is on the other hand applied to emphasise the political nature of the violence. These 'new wars' are a mixture of war (usually between states or organised political groups), organised crime (usually by private organisations with private goals) and massive human rights violations (committed usually by states or political organisations). Kaldor has noted that the new and old wars in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan have been fought by global (multi-national companies, international governments, international humanitarian organisations and UN peacekeepers) and local actors. She emphasises "the growing illegitimacy of these

wars and the need for a cosmopolitan political response – one that put individual rights and the rule of law as the centrepiece of any international intervention" (2006:3).

The second civil war in southern Sudan can be described as a 'new war'. This is where local warlords, factions of Nuer, Dinka, Baggara and Misseriya ethnic groups, oil companies, civilian groups and southern leaders have waged wars using tactics of terror and destabilisation outlawed (at least theoretically) by international humanitarian law and the laws of war. They are, as Cooper (2002:942) notes, an extension of business and economics. In the pursuit of profit and power, as in many inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts worldwide (see Zarkov 2008), civilians, and women and children in particular, become primary targets and casualties of the fighting as rape and gender-based violence often become dominant weapons (see chapter 5).

2.4.Making north-south peace: the context of 'return' of the displaced population

When I arrived in Kakuma in April 2006, the repatriation process to southern Sudan organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was underway. This was a result of several rounds of peace negotiations between Khartoum and SPLA within the framework of talks in Kenya brokered by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development Peace Process (IGAD),[82] IGAD had long advocated a democratic, secular Sudan and sharing of national wealth. IGAD called for "modalities of an interim period followed by self-determination for the south" (ICG 2002). Throughout 2002 and 2003, the fighting in the south intensified, with the government increasing aerial bombing of civilian targets, especially in Western Upper Nile, Jongolei, Blue Nile and Eastern Equatoria.[83] The government's offensive in Upper Nile was specifically designed to strengthen Khartoum's control over oil fields, often aided by the oil companies themselves (HRW 2003; Johnson 2006; Duffield 2008).

In September 2003, the government of Khartoum and the SPLA reached an interim agreement on security arrangements. In January 2004, a wealth sharing protocol was signed and on January 9, 2005, in Nairobi, the vice-president of the government of

[82] IGAD is a regional grouping of states in the Horn and Eastern Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda).
[83] For a detailed chronology of events see Johnson (2006).

Sudan, Ali Osman Taha and SPLA leader John Garang signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). In July, Garang was sworn in as the first vice-president of Sudan but died in a helicopter crash in Uganda on July 30, 2005. Salva Kiir Mayardit took his place as national vice president and commander in chief of the SPLM. On August 11, 2005, Riek Machar was installed as the vice president of southern Sudan. Despite ongoing insecurity, delays in withdrawal of northern troops from the south and sporadic confrontations between the government of Sudan and the forces of southern Sudan, including military confrontation over disputed areas of Abyei in the summer of 2008 (Johnson 2008; HRW 2008), the two sides are still at peace. As reported in January 2010, there has been a spike in tribal violence in south Sudan, with aid groups estimating at least 2,500 have been killed since the beginning of 2009 (Reuters 2010).[84]

The CPA has provided for a six-year interim period before a national referendum on the future of Sudan (when the southerners will for the first time vote on self-determination). The interim period continues to be filled with anticipation and tensions. The national presidential elections had already been postponed and were finally held in April 2010. Southern Sudanese presidential candidate removed his name from the voting list just before the elections to boycott the intimidations and manipulations of the election process by the northern Sudanese government. Despite the southern Sudanese government's complaints about the rigged elections, Omar Al-Bashir was re-elected the president of Sudan. Relations between the former foes remain tense and election officials face a raft of logistical challenges. Nuer and Dinka women and men, particularly those from the oil-rich areas of Upper Nile, were sceptical about Khartoum's sincerity,. "*We are rich here, we have oil. Why would the Arabs want to leave? But if they do not leave, we will fight them again. We want our land to be ours*", I was told by a former Nuer militia man. Although peace is still fragile, population return and rebuilding of lives are underway (see chapter 7).

3. HISTORICAL APPROACH TO NUER GENDER RELATIONS

By focusing on the gendered displacement and emplacement processes and experiences of the Nuer population as a result of the most recent conflict, this study aims to

[84] http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/HEA362272.htm accessed January 15, 2010.

contribute to southern Sudanese, and particularly, Nuer studies. This research attempts to bridge the gap between the historical and ethnographic studies carried out among the Nuer in southern Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1951; Howell 1954; Gough 1971; Kelly 1984; Hutchinson 1988, 1990, 1996; Johnson 1994) and those examining the resettlement experiences of the Nuer who migrated to the United States (Shandy 2007; Holtzmann 2000). My research contributes to the knowledge of the Nuer experiences during the recent wars (see also Hutchinson 1999, 2000; Jok and Hutchinson 1999) by extending the gendered analysis with particular focus on the diverse experiences of the youth and the older generations in exile and 'after return'. Apart from the study by Christina Falge (1997) among the Nuer refugees in Ethiopia and James Schechter's (2004) research of the experiences of the southern Sudanese male youth in Kakuma, the knowledge of the Nuer gendered and generational displacement is relatively limited. Hutchinson's historical ethnography (1996) considers transformations in social relations, including changes in masculinities and in marriage, among the Nuer in southern Sudan in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of colonialism, state-building and Christianisation. Her subsequent publications (1999, 2000) focus on the gendered nature of violence in south-south conflicts. Shandy's analysis treats some aspects of changes in gender relations among the Nuer resettled to the United States (2007: 109-126). My study aims to contribute to the studies of social change among the southern Sudanese and the Nuer in particular by fully integrating gender (and generational) analysis into the examination of women and men's experiences of conflict-induced displacement. In this way, I hope to fill the gap between the studies undertaken in southern Sudan before and during the wars and after migration to the US.

To consider changes in gender relations among the Nuer, we need to first understand Nuers' historical gender norms and social organisation. Until the 1980s, the life of Nuer men and women was closed associated with the care, protection and exchange of cattle (Hutchinson 1990, 1996). Nuer elderly women and men often emphasised that decision-making power and authority was strictly in the hands of male elders. Hutchinson (1990), however, highlights the mutual dependence and interlink between men, women and cattle. She argues that "men's control of the disruptive forces around them is limited and problematic" (1990: 371). She demonstrates how male domination and authority were conceptualised and limited due to reproductive and nurturing powers of women that give them an important source of control over men: "[…] mutual

dependence implies a mutual independence. Women have an exclusive realm of activity and hence an exclusive domain of control and influence" (ibid). She assets that women through the manipulation of their children's loyalties were capable of subverting and influencing political alliances. My own research revealed that women reproductive powers did not translate to social power to the extent that Hutchinson suggests. Their manipulation of reproductive and nurturing powers through their children was in reality limited (in scope and magnitude) as men gained throughout the years a greater right to divorce or to abandon their wives while retaining paternity rights (see below and chapter 8). At the same time, women exercised some influence over men's political affiliations. A candidate for the commissioner's office in Ler explained that "*if you convince the women to vote for you, they will go and convince their husbands. Women have special powers in this respect, as they can manipulate men through denying them food and sex*." During the political campaign in Ler, I witnessed a number of parties distributing money to women in order to gain the support of their husbands. However, with the weakening of women's position as a result of recent conflicts (see chapter 5), women's alleged reproductive and nurturing powers were in reality difficult to exercise.

In the past, in order for men to diminish their dependence on women and cattle, they showed their superiority through numerous daily cultural prohibitions distancing themselves from them. They included not sharing food with unrelated women, self-restraint in the public expression of bodily needs after initiation into manhood and the groom's abstention from food and drink during his wedding ceremony (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 67, 255-6; Deng 1972: 19-20; Hutchinson 1990: 372-373). These prohibitions are still widely observed, as even my educated male friends from Kakuma felt uncomfortable sharing food with women whom they did not know. Another rule that still persists is men's avoidance of dependence on women's procreative powers through cattle as "it is cattle that mediate between men and the procreative powers of women" (Hutchinson 1990: 373). In the eyes of most of the Nuer men whom I encountered, cattle, not women, continue to secure 'production' of children and their paternity rights. Through the payment of cattle-based bride-wealth, men continue to ensure legitimate offspring. This is also the case for securing paternity rights over

children born out of wedlock through the payment of cattle-based *ruok* (fine).[85] "*This is like getting a child for free*," told me Tany, a young man in Ler who was paid his third *ruok*.

The sources of social identity for women and men are also different. For a woman, they are rooted in her procreative powers and the children she produces. The Nuer identify fertility with the essence of femininity. According to Nuer women and men, procreation remains the main goal of life. Death without children is considered as final and complete, or as 'real death' as it is through the names of children that the memory of the deceased can be carried forward, as Nuer men reminded me constantly. However, the experience of procreation varies for women and men, as I came to appreciate it while living in the Nuer household in Ler (see chapter 3). The birth of the first child marks a woman's passage to adulthood, to being fully a woman – *ciek,*[86] to personal security and future independence in her husband's house (Hutchinson 1998: 61). Hutchinson argues that with the birth of each child, the woman gains more security and stability and increases her rights and position both within the household as well as in the community (1980: 375-376). A woman who gave birth to two children in the past could no longer be divorced as this is when the man "stops keeping track of the progeny of his bride-wealth cattle" (Evans-Pritchard 1951: 90-91). Bearing children remains an important source of power for women, as explained by those in Kakuma and Ler. "*If you have no children, jin tiele buom* [you will be without power]," told me a young divorcee woman in Ler. Yet, my research reveals that procreation is no longer a sole guarantee of security and stability of woman's position. Giving birth to more than two children does not preclude a divorce (see below). Access to alternative sources of 'power' such as education and access to income played an important role in women's autonomy (see chapters 7 and 8).

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[85] In order for a man to establish a claim over a child born out of wedlock he has to pay a small payment (*ruok*), 'childwealth', of between four and six head of cattle to establish his paternity rights (Evans-Pritchard 1951, Hutchinson 1990). Hence patrilateral affiliation is not given by birth, but has to be achieved through bride-wealth payment and "through considerable efforts, both ritual and economic" (McKinnon 2000: 61). As Gough demonstrates (1971), the hierarchical order of the Nuer was built on the distinction between those who were able through ownership of land and considerable more cattle (usually 'aristocrats'/bulls, *diel/tut*) to achieve lineal continuity through successive patrilateral affiliation to a *thok duel* and those who are not (strangers and Dinka) and hence had to affiliate through matrilateral ties. These arrangements still hold, as my research reveals.

[86] *Ciek* – woman-wife – also means 'fertile'. Barrenness implies some breach of moral code or bewitchment (Hutchison 1990; Evans-Pritchard 1956). The research participants confirmed this belief is ongoing.

For men, procreation continues to be linked to strong collective interests of immortality and pride. "*The more children you have, the more proud you are as your name will be carried long after your death*", they argue. For the man to be remembered and included in the patrilineal line of descendants, he needs to have children named after him. As Hutchinson points out, and as Nuer women and men assert, "marriage is really a matter of names" for men (1998: 61). Men's procreation continues to be also fused with their reliance on communally-owned cattle, as they have to rely on the contributions of their male relatives for bride-wealth payments and related to establishment of paternity rights. Hence, cattle continue to "reinforce the principle of masculine solidarity upon which Nuer society is founded" and "bind consecutive generations of the agnatic line" (Hutchinson 1990: 373). Although the life of the Nuer in the 1980s continued to revolve around cattle, the emergence of trade centres and markets gave a new impetus for youth migration. A new class of Nuer merchants emerged as many young bachelors migrated northwards "in search of independent wealth and a quicker road to marriage" (Hutchinson 1996: 26). Many worked as casual labourers in northern cities. Although bride-wealth remained cattle-based, "cattle of money" became for the youth a way of negotiating more autonomous marriage without onerous reliance on kin members for cattle contributions (ibid: 158-237). As I show in chapter 8, in the post-war Nuerland, access to individual source of income for educated and professional men allows them greater autonomy.

For men, wealth, in the form of cattle, used to be the main source of self-fulfilment, status and authority enabling them to participate in two potent male activities – sacrifice and cattle exchanges (Hutchinson 1990: 375). These sources of masculinity have undergone slight transformation due to colonialism, war, displacement and state-creation. Access to power and authority through the gun, the pen and government have altered to some extent the meaning of cattle (chapters 5-8). Yet, in Nuerland, only cattle-based bride-wealth or child-wealth payments continue to ensure men's reproductive powers.

Hence, men's social identity is rooted in the collective passage down of cattle from generation to generation, while women rely on their individual fertility. While men emphasise links with the grandfathers who built the herds they have inherited, women

take pride in the link between themselves and their children. This is still evident in names, where children carry the names of their forefathers, 'the son of so-and-so', while women are referred to as 'the mother of so-and-so'.

The narratives of the male elders confirmed that in the past, due to their reliance on wealth as a source of manhood and status and emphasis on communal sharing of food – encouraged from childhood – men were socially integrated as a group. As the narratives of the elderly men revealed, the masculine mode of influence demanded both solidarity and communalism, centred around the *luak* (cattle byre). Men were considered as the life-protecting force defending family, village and herd against external attack and providers of the household and homestead. Women, on the other hand, through their procreative powers, cared for the hut and its dependents and control over food, were perceived as more exclusive in their social relations limited to the immediate household members (Gough 1971; Hutchinson 1990; McKinnon 2000). Women's roles as the providers of life included all forms of nurturing, including harvesting the garden, grinding millet, cooking, brewing beer and milking cows, and, most importantly, childcare. In my research, the gender spaces are much more fluid and interlinked, and women played an important productive role in the household economy. Moreover, the gender division of labour has been altered during the wars as it will be revealed in the next chapters.

Despite the social changes, differentiation between genders and their relative power status within the household and the community as changing throughout the life-cycle still characterises Nuers' gender-generational power relations. At the age of 12-15 boys formally used to enter a lineage, traditionally in the company of a group of age-mates. Although there have been several changes in the male initiation process (see chapters 5-8; also Hutchinson 1996), in some areas of Nuerland the custom is still practiced. It involves the cutting of six parallel lines (*gaar*) on the forehead of an initiate. Through assertion of self-control and dignity and control over pain and fear, the initiate demonstrated his manhood. He also received oxen. Advent of manhood was thus marked by creation of a bond of identification with cattle (Hutchinson 1990: 378). Colonialism, education, spread of Christianity and the creation of the state as Hutchinson shows transformed modes of passage to manhood. The emergence of unscarified 'bull-boys' whose entry into adulthood was marked by education rather

than *gaar,* affected Nuer concepts of masculinity and manhood. My research demonstrates how these concepts continued to evolve due to dramatic experiences of wars, in refugee camps and in 'after-fire' Nuerland (see chapters 5-8).

While assumption of manhood used to be communal and associated with ancestors, the advent of womanhood remains a personal and individual experience. Initiation of girls into adulthood has changed little over the years, according to my respondents, and is left to nature and her procreative powers. In the past, menstruating women were perceived as polluting and subject to several restraints, including denial of drinking cow's milk and sexual intercourse (personal interviews; Hutchinson 1990; Evans-Pritchard 1956). As Nuer women told me, these customs continue to be observed mainly in rural areas. Nonetheless, the bases of gender hierarchy continue to reside in a woman's weakness, lack of self-control over her biological functions and her intertwined dependency on the cattle which ensure men's dominance over women (Hutchinson 1990: 380).

Boys' embeddedness in the family and household economy is linked to their gender position and responsibilities. As adults, sons are responsible for taking care of the family, while their sisters once married are transferred to their husbands' families. Through the payment of bride-wealth, girls bring wealth to their parents. As a result of access to education for girls, their position within the household is slowly changing. Yet, the Nuer often asked me about the benefit of education for girls in 'my culture': "*your parents educated you, they invested in you, but then when you are married for free* [without bride-wealth]. *What is then the benefit from the girl?"* Hence, the lower status of a girl remains unchanged.

With age and the marriage of their sons, the power of men decreases, while the position and independence of women is strengthened. With the dispersal of his herd and his children, the man loses status and control over women. Through reproductive abilities, the woman improves her social status among her husband's kin and enhances the possibility of independence (Hutchinson 1990: 371). An old woman, *duang*, freed from her procreative powers and dependence on biology, gains relative greater equality with men and takes on several tasks usually performed by men, which was the case for the older women in Kakuma and in Ler.

Embeddedness of gender hierarchy manifests itself in marriage. A young Nuer boy in Kakuma told me:

> […] when you marry a girl she comes to your house as your wife. […] You [as a man] must be the person who controls the family decisions since you paid bride-wealth.

Anthropologist have long debated whether African marriage is equated with 'stability' related to the rights husbands and their kin acquire in women through bridewealth payments.[87] However, this has been contested by a view that marriage in Africa, as elsewhere, is not purely an outcome but rather an extended process subject to competing interpretations and manipulations (Kuper 1970; Comaroff 1980; Webster 1981; Vellega 1981; Hutchinson 1990).

For the purpose of my analysis, I trace some of the changes in gender relations in the transformation of Nuer marriage processes. This is of particular relevance for two reasons. First, I build on the previous historical research into the changes of marriage undertaken by Hutchinson (1980, 1990, 1996) and based on Evans-Pritchard (1951) and Howell's (1953) studies. Secondly, I analyse how return and settling in processes for the displaced are intertwined with the institution of marriage and the process of becoming an adult (see chapter 8).

Defining marriage has proven difficult, and the point at which dissolution of a union is considered a divorce has also changed over time, according to Nuer elders (see also Hutchinson 1990: 395). During the 1930s and 1940s, according to Evans-Pritchard and Howell, distinct phases of marriage process were identified. Phase one included ritual events – transfer of cattle, the engagement ceremony (*cuec*), the wedding dance (*tuoc* or *bor*) and the consummation ceremony *(muot nyal*) – preceding the symbolic transfer of the girl to her husband's home. The bride remained at her natal home and the patrilocal residence was established usually after the birth of the first child. Co-residence has changed over the years, and in the 1980s Hutchinson found it not uncommon for the groom and the bride to move in together after the *muot* ceremony, or to abandon it altogether with the wedding dance signifying a formal transfer of the girl

[87] See Gluckman 1953; Evans-Pritchard 1951; Goody 1962; Comaroff 1980; Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Hutchinson 1990, 1996.

to the husband's house. A similar trend was established in Kakuma and later in Sudan among Nuer returnees (chapters 6 and 8).

The second phase was between consummation and birth of the first child, or in case of bridal infertility the point she took up residence in her husband's home. As the Ler chief, Kuong told me, the *muot* ceremony was a turning point as it marked exclusivity of rights by the groom in the bride's sexuality, combined with the passage to womanhood and acquisition by the wife of more extended rights (see also Hutchinson 1990: 396, 401). During the first and second phases divorce was permitted and implied return of bride-wealth cattle by the wife-givers to the wife-takers (minus the payment of *ruok* in cattle for a child of recognised legitimate paternity).

Phase three marked the period between the birth of the first child until "such time as a formal reclamation of bridewealth cattle, as distinct from conjugal separation, was considered impossible" (Hutchinson 1990: 397). While in the 1930s this point was linked to the birth of the second child, by the 1980s it had extended to the birth of the fourth or fifth. Hutchinson asserts that before the introduction of government chiefs' courts, after the birth of the second child, formal 'divorce' (distinct from conjugal separation) was impossible since "cattle that have children on their back cannot be returned" (1990: 397). Over the years, the point of obtaining legal divorce has shifted. Based on the examination of the jural divorce among the Nuer, Hutchinson (1990) shows that between 1936-1983 the rights husbands and their kin obtained in women through marriage payments grew. She shows how the introduction in the 30s and 40s of government chiefs, courts and police meant that "the possibility of divorce no longer depended on the willingness of the wife's kinsmen to co-operate in the return of the bridewealth cattle" (1990: 401). Instead, as narratives of the older women in my research confirmed, divorces were granted more easily and at a later stage of the marriage compared with the pre-colonial era. Shifts in rights benefited men, who could now more readily divorce wives even after the birth of many children. My research in Kakuma demonstrates that divorce in the refugee camp was rather uncommon (see chapter 6). Meanwhile, the rise of divorce claims from women in the 'after-fire' Nuerland reveals further changes to the status of both women and men and their rights within the household (see chapter 8). The rules constraining the possibility of divorce

have been further loosed: "*Nowadays, even women with five children are divorced*," confirmed the Ler chief.

Hutchinson's study (1996) locates the impetus for historical changes in the lives of the Nuer through the arrival of the colonial state, government (*kume*), Christianity (*jiluäk kuoth*) and education (*goar*). Southern regional autonomy (1972-1983) and two major civil wars brought more changes to Nuer migratory patterns, livelihoods and social relations. When Hutchison began her studies in the early 1980s the Nuer were no longer the idyllic, isolated, independent and cattle-minded communities depicted by Evans-Pritchard but increasingly influenced by civil servants and local and national bureaucracies initiated under colonial rule. Hutchinson points out how once-fluid patterns of community alliances gave way to hierarchical government-appointed chiefs charged with suppressing feuds, gathering taxes and enforcing a "standardized body of customary Nuer law" (1996: 25-26). Due to easier access, the eastern Nuer were more affected and faster incorporated into the wider political economy of Sudan (ibid: 38). Construction of roads, emergence of market centres, schools and medical facilities, the spread of missionaries and building of churches forced easterners (and to some extent western Nuer) to adapt socially and culturally. Cementing British colonial control over the Western Upper Nile, at-times brutal pacification campaigns imposed secular, administrative government chiefs and changed the role of the earth priests (*kuar moun*) and rituals to resolve homicides (see Hutchinson 1996, 1998; Johnson 1994). Greater access to missionary education and Christianity created a new basis for Nuer leadership. The age and gender bases of community leadership were challenged by state-appointed chiefs and educated administrative clerks (see also Johnson 1994).

My research is both a continuation and a departure from Hutchinson's study. On the one hand, by examining the social transformations caused by different stages of the 1983 conflict-induced displacement, my inquiry continues with the long-term historical research into social change among the Nuer. Yet, I adopt a different theoretical approach to Hutchinson's by honing on specific gender and generational experiences and social transformations caused by the recent conflicts. It this way, the study aims to

contribute to untangling particular Nuer gender and generational 'dilemmas'[88] in the context of forced displacement and emplacement.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the historical context that led to the emergence of the 'south' within Sudan and the consequent conflicts that resulted in the most recent wars (1983-2005). Understanding the geopolitical processes of colonialism, state-building in the post-independence Africa and the continuous tensed relations within Sudan for the past 50 years contextualises southern Sudanese refugees', and the Nuer in particular, plight in the 20s and 21st centuries. The recent wars, however, did not only exacerbated the 'north'-'south' tensions, but further torn apart southern communities. I have outlined the different character of the most recent war and its character as part of the globalised trend of 'new wars' (Kaldor 2006; Duffield 2008). With the discovery of oil economics became the driving force in the north-south conflict. Coupled with the use of modern warfare technology, changing warfare tactics and the emerging south-south violence which followed the 1991 SPLA split, the conflict became a 'war without end', penetrating deeply into the everyday life of civilians. The indiscriminate policy of the Khartoum government and its strategy of 'divide and rule' through sponsoring southern counter-insurgency militias inflicted indescribable violence and destruction.

The changing nature of 'south-south' violence had dramatic consequences on the social relations of the Nuer communities, as it will be shown in the following chapter. They are demonstrated in women and men's gendered experiences of inter- and intra-community violence. By providing a brief historical overview of Nuer gender relations and ideologies, I attempted to set the scene for the discussion of the social transformations that took place as a result of the recent wars.

[88] I borrow the word 'dilemmas' from the title of Hutchinson's book: The Nuer Dilemmas.

CHAPTER 5
JIOM[89] (WIND): SEASON OF FIGHTING AND RUNNING
CONFLICT, MOBILITY, GENDER

1. INTRODUCTION: NARRATIVES OF WARS

On a hot afternoon in March 2007, I was sitting in a *luak* (cattle byre) watching Nyariek's mother grinding sorghum and cooking *walwal* (sorghum porridge). Nyariek, a 16-year old Nuer girl whom I'd met in Kakuma, had recently returned to Sudan. When I bumped into her in Ler she asked me to visit her mother whom she had not seen since leaving for Kenya in 2001. After travelling by an old mini-bus and walking for three hours through dusty savannah, we reached Maper, Nyariek's birthplace. Inside the *luak* I listened to women narrate stories of war and displacement:

> "Which war do you want me to talk about?" asked the mother of Nyariek who stayed in Maper throughout the conflicts. "They were all here; they came like *jiom* [wind]. We suffered a lot here because of oil. First the Arabs came and this was *koor kume* – the war of the government. Then the Dinka started fighting the Nuer and people had to run from one place to another. Then the Nuer started fighting each other. These conflicts were different because of [the use of] guns. The mothers stayed with children behind in the bush. Many men were killed and others ran away. Women were killed, and if you were lucky, you were taken as a wife by the enemy. Houses were burnt and cows and goats were all taken away. There was a lot of suffering and running.

Stories of war, violence, running and survival were a common narrative of many southern Sudanese whom I met first in Egypt, and then during fieldwork in Kenya and Sudan. The wind that came from behind the *luak*, as predicted by the most influential Nuer prophet Nundɛng,[90] brought the turmoil of the second civil war (1983-2005) to the Sudanese and the Nuer in particular, causing traumatic changes in their lives. Although the first civil war (1955-1972) devastated much of southern Sudan, including the communities of eastern Nuer bordering Ethiopia, severe flooding in the Western

[89] *Jiom* (wind) is used as a metaphor for wars and experiences of violence and forced displacement.

[90] Nundɛng Bong is generally considered as the first and most influential Nuer prophet. Seized by the divinity Deng, he combined the ideas of divinity and the spiritual behaviour of Aiwel, Deng and Nuer earth masters *(kuar moun*) and created a concept of *guk kuoth* (the vessel of divinity). He was born in the late 1830s into a family of Gaaleak earth-masters living among the Jikany Nuer in Western Upper Nile. He is believed to have prophesied the second civil war and especially the violence among the southerners (see Evans-Pritchard 1956; Johnson 1994).

Upper Nile region spared the western Nuer from the disastrous consequences of the conflict experienced elsewhere (see chapter 4). It was the second civil war, the discovery of oil in the Western Upper Nile region, the desire of the Khartoum government to control it and subsequent nine years of inter- and intra-ethnic fighting that took place among the Nuer (and Dinka) that decimated many Western Upper Nile communities and resulted in a collapse of local social and livelihood systems.

This chapter investigates how women and men, young and old, cope with and within violent conflicts. What are the implications of such conflicts for gender identities and relations of power? Wars historically have been symbolised as the "touchstone of 'manliness'," expressed through male aggression, brutality and violence, an image often perpetrated in literature, films, songs and tales (see White 2007). White argues that men's roles as protectors of women are accentuated while combat is seen as the ultimate test of masculinity. Women and girls have been portrayed misleadingly as victims, peacemakers and/or mothers of the nation providing support for heroic male combatants. Male agency dominates the discourse of war, while women and girls have been rendered silent and invisible (see Denov and Gervais 2007). I show that such simplistic interpretations leave complex female and male roles in war, and consequent changes in gender relations, unexplained and untheorised. My data suggests that war and conflict open up different possibilities for disempowering some women and empowering some men, while creating opportunities to reverse some gender imbalances. As the example of Nuer women below shows, women play an important role in fostering militarised masculine identities, even though their own position is often weakened in the process.

Although there is emerging literature on the multidimensional female roles in conflicts, there are relatively few studies that consider the ways in which women and girls negotiate their security and well-being in an unstable war environment (Moser and Clark 2001). A few exceptions include contributions by Nordstrom (1997), Devon and Gervais (2007), Utas (2003, 2005b), Boyden and de Berry (2004) and Zarkov (2008), who emphasise the importance of recognising agency among war-affected children and youth, and girls and women. This chapter aims to contribute to this literature.

This chapter traces the gendered and generational consequences of the second civil war and the inter- and intra-community conflicts. Predominantly based on secondary sources, including key literature on the conflict in southern Sudan (Johnson 2006; Hutchinson 1996, 1998, 2000; Jok 1998, 2001; Jok and Hutchinson 1999), it is supported by primary material collected through life stories in Kakuma and Sudan. The section that follows focuses on one of the most dramatic consequences of the conflict, the unprecedented large-scale internal and cross-border displacement. I locate the experience of displacement of the Nuer in their socio-political history of mobility and migration as agro-pastoralist communities. Although migration and mobility are not new to the Nuer and many other southern Sudanese, the scale, abrupt nature, composition and directions of migratory flows are unique in their history (see Shandy 2007; Holtzman 2000; Hutchinson 1996). Primarily using ethnographic data gathered during my fieldwork in Kakuma and in Sudan, I highlight the gendered access to migration and displacement and its different effects on the mobility of Nuer boys, girls, women and men. The second section outlines some of the changes in gender identities, institutions and ideology as a result of the conflict, militarisation of southern Sudanese society, intensification of ethnicised violence and subjugation (cf. Gilroy 1993; Schechter 2004). I focus on the emergence of hyper-masculinities, new militarised ethnicity, changing discourses of gender rights, changes in the position of women and girls in the institution of marriage and weakened capacity of women and men to provide security and livelihoods for their families.

2. WAR COSTS: MASS DISPLACEMENT AND DIVERSE MOBILITY

2.1. Destruction of homelands

The cost of the most recent wars fell heavily on the civilian population, not only because they were denied protection, but also because of socio-economic collapse. The effects of the recent conflicts are so immense that it is impossible to discuss them all in this chapter. I will highlight only those consequences most central to the argument of the thesis. The region has horrendous rates of maternal and child mortality rates (one in

four newborn in southern Sudan does not reach the age of five),[91] rampant insecurity, one of the lowest education rates in the world,[92] high abortion rates due to rape and sexual violence, high levels of severe malnutrition and chronic depletion of assets through the loss of cattle and land (see El Jack 2007; Jok 1998; Deng 1999, 2002). With men driven into exile, recruited into rebel forces or killed, one of the consequences of the recent conflicts is a high number of widows and orphans (Fitzgerald 2002; HSBA 2008). Women now outnumber men. As a result of wars and famines, southern Sudan has the lowest proportion of adult population in the world (21% are under five years old) (NSCE and UNICEF 2004: 3).

During the wars and recurrent droughts, Sudan has been subject to chronic food shortages, with dramatic famines in 1984, 1988 and 1998. Based on his doctoral fieldwork in southern Sudan, Luka Biong Deng (2008) notes that during previous conflicts, southern Sudan was not prone to famines. Unofficial estimates suggest that some 250,000 people died as a result of hunger and war in 1988 alone (Minear et al. 1991; Burr and Collins 1995; Scroggins 2002). Outraged by the mass starvation, the international community intervened in 1989 under the umbrella of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) which brought international NGOs back to Sudan. Larry Minear et al. in his review of OLS argues that the international community was committed to preventing such a disaster from happening again (1991: ix; see also Burr and Collins). However, the second famine of 1998 similarly claimed some 300,000 deaths (Deng 1999, 2008).

The international aid that poured into Sudan through the OLS base in the Kenyan border town of Lokichoggio and by plane assisted war-stricken communities throughout the south (and north). However, food distribution had also a negative

[91] There are no country-wide specific demographic figures. The best publication available providing estimates is: "Towards a Baseline: Best Estimates of Social Indicators for Southern Sudan", New Sudan Centre for Statistics and Evaluation in association with UNICEF, 2004.

[92] According to the NCSE and UNICEF Baseline study (2004: 3), the southern Sudanese net enrolment ratio in primary school (20%) is the worst in the world and second worst after Afghanistan in terms of gross enrolment ratio in primary school (23%). Female to male enrolment is the lowest in the world (35%). Only one out of every five children of school age is in class and around three times more boys than girls are at school. Only 2% complete primary school education. According to the 2004 estimates, only 500 girls finish primary school each year compared to 2,000 boys. Southern Sudan is second to Niger in terms of adult literacy rate (24%), adult female illiteracy rate (88%) and youth literacy rate (31%).

impact on local agro-pastoralist communities who stopped growing their own food due to both insecurity and the availability of free food. Queueing for food became a permanent feature in local communities. During my stay in the region, I often observed airplane drops or food delivered by the World Food Program (WFP) or international and local NGOs. This dependency on grain, rice and oil distribution was criticised by many elderly women and men: "*nei ti naath* [Nuer] *have become lazy now. They do not know how to produce their own food any longer. This international aid made us into beggars."* I will come back to the discussion of changes in livelihoods in chapter 7.

The wars brought complete destruction of the fragile NGO-sponsored infrastructure established in southern Sudan in the 1972-1983 inter-war period. Bombardment of civilian targets, especially urban areas, by the Khartoum government destroyed most health facilities, schools and government buildings. Lack of basic infrastructure was one of the reasons often mentioned by Dinka and Nuer refugees in Kakuma that delayed their return to places of origin (see chapter 7). Most importantly, people's survival methods have become more individualistic and household-oriented. Kinship networks underwent transformation and became more individualised while people's ability to maintain their cultural and community-practices in regulating abuse of power declined dramatically (see Jok 2005: 151).

The south-south violence had a devastating effect in the Western Upper Nile region. By late 1992, the economic livelihood system based on agro-pastoralism and fishing was destroyed. Most inhabitants of oil rich areas in Unity state, especially around Abiemnom, were displaced. Deng notes that Dinka and Nuer counter-insurgency attacks contributed to a higher frequency and degree of displacement among the non-poor households in Bahr el Ghazal region than the Arab-sponsored militia raids (2008: 382). My interview material shows a similar displacement pattern among the Nuer residents of Western Upper Nile. Most Nuer women and men pointed out that economics and prospects of enrichment through looting of property were key factors triggering and sustaining the occurrence of militia attacks. Residents of Western Upper Nile similarly reported that during Arab attacks "*no household, no woman or child was spared.*" Nuer militia attacks usually targetted specific households, since "*the commanders were fighting each other, and they were eager to get their cows.*"

2.2. Locating Nuer mobility: migration and displacement

The political and civil turmoil that erupted in southern Sudan in 1983 claimed over two million lives and resulted in one of the largest displacement in the world, with over five million people internally displaced and another 500,000-700,000 searching for refuge in neighbouring countries (International Crisis Group 2002; UNMIS 2006).[93] Western Upper Nile region suffered most of its displacement during the 1990s conflicts over oil with an estimated 70,500 Nuer civilians displaced from the area between June 1998 and December 1999 alone (Hutchinson 2000: 7).

The current migration and displacement of the Nuer population have to be seen in the context of the wider mobility of these agro-pastoralist Nilots. As noted in chapter 4, seasonal migration with cattle or subsequently for work or trade has been an enduring feature of Nuer lives. In addition, the experiences of the 18th century expansion of the Nuer started the migratory journeys from the Western Upper Nile towards the east, resulting in the absorption of thousands of Dinka and Anuak communities (Kelly 1985: Hutchinson 1996; Johnson 1994; Beswick 2006). Although migration has been an integral feature of the majority of agro-pastoralist Nilotic populations, the recent massive dispersal was unprecedented by its often forced nature, scale and direction. The option of returning to a previous place of residence was closed to many for years and sometimes decades. Post-1983 massive displacement opened up new migratory routes for the Nuer as well as other southern Sudanese. Those living near border areas usually crossed over to Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, or the Central African Republic. They settled either locally or in UN- or host government-administered refugee camps. Others migrated towards Khartoum and settled in squatter areas around the capital where they were subjected to continuous harassment, displacement and abuse from the government and the local population (Assal 2008; Hutchinson 1996; Deng 1995). In addition to emerging southern Sudanese (particularly Nuer) diasporas in nearby African countries,[94] resettlement of refugees to western countries resulted in creation of

[93] In Kenya, over 70,000 Sudanese refugees resided in refugee camps in Kakuma and in Nairobi; in Uganda 212,000 were self-settled; in Ethiopia 96,000 were mainly in camps; in Egypt 30,000 lived in towns; and 45,000, 36,000 and over 200,000 were displaced to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Chad, respectively (ICG 2002).

[94] There is a growing body of literature on the Sudanese diaspora, including refugees in Egypt who settled in Cairo and Alexandria (see Fábos 1999, 2001, 2008; Cocker 2004; Kani Edwards 2007; Rowe 2006; Moro 2004; Akuei Riak 2001, 2004; Ainsworth 2003; Grabska 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009).

substantial Nuer communities in Canada, Australia and the USA (see Shandy 2007; Holtzman 2000, 2003).

A 60-something year-old woman chief of Padeh, a payam in Ler county, recounted the story of her family:

> When the fighting with the Arabs started our village was bombed. But we managed and we stayed in the village. But then Gadet [the SPLA Bul Nuer commander[95]] came and took all our cows. During the war most of the children went to Khartoum. One of the daughters was taken [as a wife] by the Bul. She has not come back yet. My husband was killed by the soldiers in front of me. I stayed in the village because someone had to take care of the people. One of my sons went to Ethiopia, but I am not sure where he is now.

After the 1998 destruction of Ler, Nyamead, now an elderly woman in her late 60s, was one of the few who stayed behind.

> All people from this area ran away, some went to Nyuong [a Nuer area south of Ler], others to Eastern Nuer, some to Khartoum. We remained only two women here. During the war, Antonovs [Russian-made military planes used by the government of Sudan] used to bomb us. We would dig a hole and stay there during the day. At night we would go next to the primary school [in the centre of Ler] and hide there. There were no people here, only wild animals but they did nothing to us. … [Why did you stay here?] I was very annoyed, my first child [son] died and my daughter died the same day. I was already a widow and an old woman. I asked myself: what type of life will I live? I decided to stay here and die.

As these narratives show, displacement experiences varied for women and men. The majority of the Western Upper Nile population was displaced with some migrating long distances while others searched for temporary refuge nearby. Nuer women and men narrated how their families, households and communities were separated due to constant insecurity, multi-directional violence, abrupt displacement and terror campaigns to clear oilfields for the economic benefit of Khartoum, multinationals and local warlords. Like Nyamead's, most of the family/household stories that I collected were told in a fragmented manner, with members of the same household having gone through a variety of experiences during the conflicts, some dispersing, others staying behind, joining the SPLA or counter-insurgent groups and/or being their victims. During the inter-ethnic fighting, the majority of the western Nuer

[95] Bul Nuer, inhabitants of the Bentiu area and the Dok Nuer, residing in the Ler county, experienced some of the most fierce inter-community fighting in the late 1990s and early 2000. The Bul Nuer were supported by the Khartoum government and used as proxy to destabilise the western Nuer communities.

migrated to Khartoum, as the closest and most accessible destination. When the Dinka-Nuer violence subsided and the Nuer-Nuer fighting intensified, many Dok Nuer moved south into Dinka lands. Almost all the people I met had relatives in Khartoum, Juba, East Africa and the west. Some were even in China.

Although it is often argued that war-time migration (as opposed to economic migration) is often characterised as forced, involuntary and unplanned (Kunz 1981; Richmond 1988; Van Hear 1998; Indra 1999a), the experiences of many Sudanese who became refugees in Kakuma or were displaced internally give a different picture. Strategising where, how and when to move was part of the dispersal. Although some of the aspects of migration could not be planned due to increasing insecurity and escalating fighting those who moved far away from their places of origin usually had some degree of control over their movement (see the section below). Access to mobility, however, was not equal and open to all. As the next section shows, displacement was highly gendered, with those in privileged positions having greater access to more secure places, in addition to boys and men being more mobile as they searched for protection, livelihood and education. Hence, there were differences in people's and household members' experiences during the wars, and barriers to sharing these experiences.

2.3. Mobility, diversity and gender: 'lost boys', 'invisible girls' and 'the world of women'

Most of the Nuer were displaced several times, with some migrating first to Khartoum, then making their way to refugee camps in Ethiopia, and later to Kenya or Uganda (see chapter 6). Their narratives were filled with metaphors of running, constant movement from one place to another, hunger, starvation, death and a will to survive. Some travelled by foot, others by boats, trucks, donkeys and planes. The journeys from one destination took from days to months, depending on access, resources at the household's disposal and distance to the destination. Some families followed husbands who joined the SPLA and settled with them either around the military camps or in the refugee camps in Ethiopia. Others took decisions to separate, with men going to 'the bush' while leaving some of the wives with children behind. Later on, higher-ranking soldiers who reached refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya arranged for their families to join them, sometimes leaving one of the wives behind to look after property. There

were also those who managed to reach refuge through their connections to international humanitarian and missionary organisations delivering aid during the war. Many bribed pilots of humanitarian planes to transport their family members to Kenya. Others, like the family of my research assistant in Kakuma, Nyakuoth, came to Kenya through their church.[96] Hence, access to refugee camps in Kenya was considered a privilege open to influential SPLA officers, church members and humanitarian aid workers. Those without connections would often sell their remaining property (cows) and move towards Khartoum.

Differential access to migration was apparent in the demographic composition of the refugee population in Kakuma. According to official UNHCR statistics there was a great imbalance in the percentage of women and girls to boys and men, especially pronounced in the ratio of girls of marriageable age to boys or young men (UNHCR 2006). This had a direct impact on changes in gender relations in the camp as I will discuss in chapter 6. At the same time, there were high numbers of elder women with children whose husbands stayed in Sudan as they were fighting in the war, or returned just after the signing of the peace agreement in order to secure positions in the government. Many of them were also widows of either high-ranking SPLA officers who had access to take their families to a safe refuge outside the country. It should be noted that Kakuma camp was famous as a retreat place for high-ranking SPLA officers. In fact, many of them sent their families to the camp for protection and education and would visit them occasionally during their 'holidays' from the military campaigns.

Becoming 'Lost Boys': War as suffering, war as opportunity

I met Kim Jial when I first arrived in southern Sudan in January 2007 in Rubkona. Kim was working as a field coordinator with UNICEF in Western Upper Nile. He was part of the 'lost boys' group who left Sudan in 1988. He came back to Sudan in 2005.

> I was one of the SPLA child soldiers. The SPLA commanders came to the house of my parents and they requested that my father gives one boy to the army. My father had two wives, and my mother was the second wife. I was the first born of my mother but I was not the oldest son.

[96] Nyakuoth's father was a pastor in the Presbyterian church. When fighting intensified in Ler, he arranged through the church for the family to be brought to Kenya.

> I was maybe eight or nine years old then. It was not supposed to be me who was going to be sent to the army. But because my father knew that I was smart and strong he was convinced that I was the only one who would survive this difficult journey to Ethiopia. That's why he convinced my mother to give me to the SPLA. My mother was crying and threatened him with divorce. But at the end she had to accept.
>
> The journey to Ethiopia was very difficult. Many of the children lost their lives on the way. Once we arrived in Ethiopia we were in the Bilfam camp. In the morning we went to school, at one o'clock we would finish classes and prepare food for ourselves and then in the afternoon we had to go and do military training. Then we would be sent for military training every six months. Once the children reached the age of 12 they would be sent to combat. […]
>
> When the Mengistu regime fell in Ethiopia, you have heard of the crossing of the Gillo river, when so many of the Sudanese children were killed. I was about 11 years old then. The ones who were shooting at us, and I saw this with my own eyes, were women who were in the Ethiopian army. They had big guns and machine guns and they just shot everyone. They did not pay attention that we were children. I was thinking, how could they do that, they are women and have children themselves? But you know, women are more full of revenge than men. They do not forget.
>
> The way to Kakuma through Ethiopia was very difficult. We were escorted by the teachers who were given guns and they were in charge of our protection. ICRC gave us food on the way. We went first to Pochalla and stayed there nine months. Then we proceeded to Kapoeta, and then to Narus and from there to Lokichoggio. We finally arrived in Kakuma. We were some 16,000 boys who left from Ethiopia and only 14,000 made it to Kakuma. Among those, there were maybe some 2,000 Nuer. The majority were Dinka. Some of the boys then went back to Sudan, although it was not easy to cross the border because the Kenyan government was controlling it. Many of the lost boys then got resettled mainly to America.

Most of the young men in the camp, like Kim Jial and his friends (see section 3) were part of the group dubbed as the 'lost boys'. They left southern Sudan in the 1980s, when they were recruited by the SPLA, taken away from their parents often without their knowledge and put in military training camps in Ethiopia as part of the 'Red Army' described in section 3 (see also HRW 1994; Schechter 2004: Berger forthcoming). In 1991, when the Mengistu regime fell, the SPLA suffered a devastating loss of their military bases in Ethiopia. The new government of Ethiopia, composed of rebel groups supported by al-Bashir's regime, was hostile to the SPLA leadership and its constituency housed in the UNHCR-supported and SPLA-managed camps throughout Western Ethiopia (see Schechter 2004). As a result of increasing hostility against the SPLA and insecurity in the border region of Gambella,[97] the SPLA had to

[97] In addition to the threat that the Provisional Government of Ethiopia would allow Sudan's government to launch attacks from inside Ethiopia, refugees faced insecurity created by combat between Ethiopian Nuer and Anyuak militias in the Gambella area, where the bulk of SPLA bases were located, and marauding bands of armed men (Johnson 2006:88). The Sudanese air force initiated a bombing

evacuate the camps in Ethiopia and some 200-350,000 Sudanese were forced back into southern Sudan (see Johnson 2003; Jok and Hutchinson 1999) – among them Kim nd many other young men whom I later met in Kakuma.

Kim and other boys under the guardianship of their 'teachers' undertook a long journey on foot from Ethiopia via Sudan to Kenya. Many died on the way. Others were severely malnourished and barely made it across the border. Some 16,000 of them were assisted by the ICRC during their passage to Kenya. They reached the border with Kenya in April 1992 after several months of walking. UNHCR set up an emergency camp first in Lokichoggio, the border town in Kenya. A few months later it was moved for security reasons to Kakuma. The term 'lost boys' was given to this group by international aid workers in the 1990s when humanitarian agencies learned about their horrific conditions. It was later picked up by the media, US Christian organisations and the US government in justifying the resettlement of the 'orphan' boys in the USA. The metaphor referred to Peter Pan and his orphan companions "who clung together to escape a hostile adult world". The term has since then entered the public and media language after resettlement of some 3,800 of these young men in the USA since 2000.[98]

The other larger group of young boys and men in Kakuma came much later in early 2000 and after. Their trajectories of their journeys and displacement were very different to those who came to Kakuma in 1992. However, as they often also experienced military training at a young age, they put themselves in the same category of 'lost boys', the only difference being that they failed to be resettled to the USA. Some came to Kakuma as a result of being wounded in Sudan, others to pursue education. The wounded were transported to the ICRC hospital in Lokichoggio and subsequently went to the camp in order to escape military life. Many young men, soldiers of SPLA or other rebel groups, were also sent to the camp by their commanders to pursue education. As young men and boys reported on numerous occasions: '*We have a mission here; it is education; once the mission is complete, we will go back,*' Paul Thok told me in Kakuma.

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campaign against returnees and, subsequently, in 1992 launched a cross-border attack on Pochalla, where a large displaced persons' camps were set up (HRW 1994).

[98] The USA opened its doors to about 3,800 'lost boys' in 2000 and 2001, resettling them as refugees on the grounds that they would be persecuted in their native Sudan. They were resettled in 40 cities, averaging about 100 per city. Halted after 9/11 for security reasons, the programme that brought the 'lost boys' to the US restarted in 2004.

Many of the young men experienced multiple journeys and displacements. Tito, Bol and Gatmai, a group of young male friends from Ler, escaped first to Khartoum to avoid military recruitment and to search for work and education. Later, they reached refugee camps in Ethiopia in hope of accessing education and food. As poverty and insecurity for the Sudanese intensified after Mengistu's fall in 1991, they went to Kenya, settling first in Nairobi and then moving to Kakuma. One of the three friends whom I met after their return to Ler also had a short stint in Uganda while looking for education.

For these young men, war was a double-edged sword, marked by great suffering, sacrifice, brutality, violence but at the same time an opportunity to access education and improve family livelihoods. A 22-year-old Nuer in Kakuma told me:

> If we were not soldiers we would not have got the chance to be here. Because we were soldiers we managed to come to Kakuma. It was my father who was told to select two or three boys to be soldiers. One lost his life in the war as a soldier. Our father hid two of us and tried to get some ways for us to study.
>
> In Sudan we did not know anything, we knew nothing about Sudan. We only knew our village. But now, we have known the Sudan, Africa and the world at large (sic!). So it is a great advantage for us. If there was no civil war in Sudan we would not be able to study here. The civil war has given us a great advantage. So nowadays, as we go back, we already know that this is our land and we have to work for it. We do not expect white people to come from abroad and work for us, what are we? (sic!) It is our land and our grand grandfathers lost their lives to prepare us for life. We have to work and make peace in our land. The war has given a great advantage to us, or to myself. Because without the war maybe now I could lose my life in a war [in local fighting over cattle or girls] or I would be keeping cattle. But now when I go back I will not be keeping cattle again. What I will be doing as I go back it will be official.

The resettlement programme for the separated boys that was started by the USA in the late 1990s from the camps in Kenya and Ethiopia also encouraged migration of the young boys. As Dianna Shandy argues, "the experience of Nuer refugee migrants demonstrates the ways in which actions of individuals were undertaken on behalf of family groups" (Shandy 2003: 2). She shows how through pooling of family resources, Nuer refugees were able to access third-country resettlement. When the rumour of resettlement to the USA spread in the refugee camps and across the border to Sudan many families decided to send their children to the camps with the hope of migration to

the west. A number of young men in Kakuma reported that their families sold cattle or bribed church or humanitarian organisations in order to arrange a transfer of their children to the camps. There were also rumours, narrated to me by eyewitnesses, of the SPLA commanders sending their own sons and relatives to Kakuma as 'orphan boys'. In 2006, the USA started receiving requests from the resettled 'lost boys', now often US citizens, to bring their families from Sudan, or from Kakuma. In the words of one of the US officials, this is when the USA was faced with a dilemma.[99] The boys were resettled as orphans while in fact, their mothers, fathers and siblings were in Sudan, Ethiopia or Kakuma, and the 'boys' often had direct contact with them even before resettlement and continued to support the family through remittances (see Grabska 2010).

As education became more valued many boys decided to undertake migratory journeys in search of knowledge and access to schools. Families primarily sent sons to the refugee camps to access education. In numerous cases, brothers and cousins would migrate to Kakuma and form boys-run households while their sisters, mothers and fathers stayed behind in Sudan. By the late 1990s, Kakuma had become well known in Sudan as a place offering free education, often referred to by international humanitarians as a "boarding school". Some would even argue that Kakuma was a school (and a training camp) for SPLA soldiers.

'The world of women' and 'invisible girls'

As noted earlier, as a result of war southern Sudan has more women than men. There are no official statistics on the number of widows and orphans but the numerical gender imbalance has been acknowledged by the government of southern Sudan which created a post of minister for widows and orphans affairs. During my stay in the region, the minister was touring southern Sudan to estimate the number of war widows and orphans (see Fitzgerald 2002; NSCE 2003; HSBA 2008). For widows of SPLA soldiers, the southern government provides jobs or reimburses rents (see chapter 8). During my travels around the Western Upper Nile region, I came across many villages

[99] Personal conversation (2006) with the US representative of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. It is the US agency responsible for the refugee resettlement programme. I was told that at present the US government is keeping on hold the family reunification claims.

that were inhabited only by women, children and a few elderly men. Many women became widows or were left behind to look after property. Those without family connections to the SPLA, churches or international organisations had much less chance of reaching remote destinations, such as Kakuma. When I asked an elderly woman in Maper about the whereabouts of missing men, she explained:

> All men have gone. Boys were taken to the army, men were killed during the war, went to fight in the bush, or went off to the north. Others went for refuge in other countries. We, the women, are the ones who stayed behind. We had to take care of the children, the property and the cattle, when the men were running.

The gender and generational imbalance in Kakuma, Sudan and in the resettlement countries[100] was influenced by gendered access to migration among the Nuer. The access to migration and mobility was determined by the differentiated responsibilities of women and men in the household, with women remaining to protect homesteads while men went to the battlefield. Similarly, different position of boys and girls in the household and their gendered embeddedness in the household economy influenced their access to, and patterns of, displacement and migration.

Migration and displacement were both gendered and gendering – affected by and affecting Nuer gender identities, division of labour and gender ideologies. Boys and young men were more mobile with easier access to refuge than girls and women. According to Nuer gender ideologies, women and girls are more closely associated with the homestead, as this is their domain of work and protection. As sources of valuable bridewealth, the chastity and purity of girls is to be protected as girls who are 'spoilt' (*keaagh*) lose value and command a lower number of cattle (Evans-Pritchard 1951; Hutchinson 1996; interviews with Nuer women and men). Although younger girls join their brothers in the migration during cattle grazing periods, migration for education and labour has been exclusively reserved for male relatives. In order to protect girl's integrity (and virginity), girls are not allowed to move around by

[100] The gender imbalance was also visible in the Sudanese communities resettled in the USA, Australia and Canada. In the USA, for example, in the period between 1990-1997, among some 4,306 resettled Sudanese, there were three adult males to one adult female (Shandy 2007: 64). Only 89 'lost girls' in comparison to some 3,500 'lost boys' resettled in the USA in 2001 (London 2003). Hence, as Shandy argues, "selection of refugees for resettlement in the Unites States is gendered" (2007: 64).

themselves and they have to be accompanied by their sisters, mothers or other female or male relatives.

When I inquired about the reasons for the lack of girls in Kakuma, a young man explained to me:

> In our culture, girls are not allowed to move on their own. They have to stay with the family. The boys are free to go and explore. Also, the girls are not supposed to go to school because it is believed that they would become prostitutes and the benefit of a girl for her parents will be lost [bridewealth]. The boys are the ones who get education. Girls do not have brains for it. They are there to serve us, the men, they are there to give birth to children and for the parents to get wealth [bridewealth payments in form of cattle] from them. As a Nuer, you cannot allow your daughter to go around by herself. Also, the conditions of the journey during the war were so difficult that the girls would have never survived them. It is only the boys, because they are strong, who were able to make it.

Nuer women and men offered further explanations of the high demographic imbalance in the camps. Access to refugee camps was mainly through military recruitment during which the SPLA targetted predominantly boys.[101] Migration to the camps was seen as a strategy of investment in sons, education not being considered appropriate for girls. Some girls who came with their families managed to make their ways to the refugee camps. In most cases, their fathers or brothers were either in the military, had high political positions, or were active in a church. Others were sent by parents to support married female relatives who had migrated to the camps with their husbands.

To summarise, although circumscribed by the conditions of war and violence, southern Sudanese boys and male youth nonetheless had greater room for manoeuvre with regard to war-time migration. Through their modest strategic and tactic agency, they were trying to get out of what Hendrik Vigh refers to in his study of youth soldiers in Guinea Bissau, as a lost generation 'locked' into a position of social confinement (2006: 46, 2007). Unlike the Guinean youth who had less choices for escaping the violence, the southern Sudanese had some leeway not only in deciding whether to leave, but also where to go. Many found support through kin members, family and friends in accessing education in Nairobi and Kampala. Being a youth meant, as

[101] The camp officials in Kakuma were well aware of this fact. The issue was, however, not publicly discussed.

elsewhere in Africa, escaping socially confining structures and experimenting with other paths to adulthood (see Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006a; Prince 2006) including migration and military training. Their actions also show that despite war conditions, they were pursuing longer-term life projects. Mats Utas draws on a term coined by Vigh (2007: 136) to describe this mode of social interaction as 'social navigation' – "the way in which agents guide their lives through troublesome social and political circumstances" (Utas 2005a: 408). Under the severe and brutal circumstances of war, military recruitment provided an opportunity not only to re-configure masculine identities but also, for some, access to education and autonomy (see chapter 6). Boys enjoyed greater scope to decide how, where and whether to migrate while balancing their personal and communal risks, costs and benefits. For Nuer and southern Sudanese girls (and women), the gendered notions of femininity and their position in the household and community at large made them more 'invisible' and less 'mobile'. However, they were not only passive victims of war, but managed, as will be shown, to survive, resist, and negotiate their position in the conflict zones.

3. WOMEN AND MEN: WAR AND VIOLENCE

3.1. Ethnicisation of Dinka-Nuer warfare: violence on women's bodies

While women and children were targets of military actions by the northern Sudanese state and its Arab militias until 1991 Nuer and Dinka fighters did not intentionally target and kill women, children or the elderly. However, subsequent south-south warfare was often characterised by abandonment of codes of fighting previously honoured by both Nuer and Dinka (see chapter 4). Women and children became the primary victims of "the war of the educated" (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 131; interviews with elders). [102] The burning of households and crops, previously prohibited

[102] The elders in my interviews explained that intentional killing of women used to be considered a cowardly act, an affront against Divinity and God (*kuoth nhial*), which would bring disaster and misfortune to the community. In the past, in order to redress such acts, Evans-Pritchard (1950, 1951, 1956) and Hutchinson (1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b) show how acts of homicide among the Nuer (and Dinka) were subject to a series of ethics and spiritual taboos that required an identification of the slayer and purification of his polluted blood through the payment of bloodwealth cattle compensation to the family of the deceased. The purification was completed by a blood release (*bier*) from the slayer's finger or forearm by the earth priest (*kuaar muon*) (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 293). The purification of *nueer,* the pollution of blood through homicide, was considered necessary to avoid divine anger. The Nuer believe that without performing this procedure (*bier*) the slayer and his family would die, especially if ever sharing food with the family of the deceased. During the first civil war with the influx of guns into the local fighting this tradition started to change as it became often impossible due to the ambiguous nature

in Nuer/Dinka community confrontations, became part of war tactics in the south-south conflicts.

As Hutchinson shows, the 1990s south-south violence led to "a rapid polarization and militarization of Nuer/Dinka ethnic identities" and "a reformulation of the relationship between gender and ethnicity in Nuer eyes" (2000b: 7). Historically, Nuer ethnicity was based on the performative concept where women and children could acquire the ethnic/community identity of their husbands through marriage and transfer of bridewealth. As the Nuer women and men argue(d), "*girls and women belong to everyone, except in bed*". Hence, any Dinka girl or woman, and consequently a child, could become a Nuer through marriage. The south-south violence, however, led to the rejection of this fluid notion of ethnicity, as Hutchinson asserts, "in favour of a more 'primordialist' concept rooted in procreative metaphors of shared blood" (2000b: 8). This was confirmed by my respondents who argued that "*now you can only be Nuer through blood*" (i.e. if you were born Nuer). Women and children could no longer acquire different ethnic identity through marriage and cattle. Hence, the ethnic identities of Nuer became more rigid with blood taking precedence over bridewealth. Dinka and Nuer women and children became military targets as their ethnicity was now perceived as fixed. This had implications for child custody disputes. In Kakuma I witnessed a case around a child born to a Dinka woman married to a Nuer man. In Kakuma, she was impregnated by her Dinka lover. The Dinka community argued that the child belongs to the biological father, a direct contradiction of the paternity rules of both Dinka and Nuer.[103] In the end, the Dinka requested a DNA test, which was supported by a UNHCR protection officer, in order to establish custody rights.

This hardening of identities is common to ethnic-based conflicts across the globe (see Zarkov 2008: Giles and Hyndman 2004; El-Bushra 2000a, 2000b; Enloe 1983; Yuval Davis 1997; Korac 1996) as women, no longer immune from inter-community fighting, are transformed into boundary-makers in ethno-nationalist identity struggles. Ethnicity appears in part to be created, maintained and socialised through male control of gender

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of the 'bullet' to identify the particular slayer. Hutchinson (1996, 1998, 2000b) discusses the changing nature of the taboo and the resulting change in Nuer ethnic identities.

[103] Both Dinka and Nuer consider paternity rights based on cattle paid (see chapter 4). Even if a child was born out of wedlock, the official husband who paid cattle for the wife is entitled to the child. The biological father can claim rights to the child provided he pays cattle compensation (*ruok*) for the child to the official husband.

identities as women's fundamental human rights and dignity are caught up in male power struggles.

The indiscriminate killing of civilian women and children and wilful destruction of property by Dinka and Nuer military groups marked a new turning point in the south-north conflict and in the inter- and intra-community fighting. The Bul Nuer militia of Paulino Matip and the SPLA forces of Peter Gadet (also Nuer) raided back and forth across the homelands of the Dok. In 1998, they destroyed the booming market centre at Ler, the hometown of Riek Machar and a hub for international humanitarian relief. They kidnapped, raped and killed women and children, often in front of their husbands, brothers and fathers. Majok, a young man who escaped forced recruitment by SPLA and stayed throughout the war in Ler, told me:

> When the Bridage [Paulino Matip's splinter group] came in 1998, I ran to the bush and hid there. Then I saw a group of seven, maybe ten, *askari* [soldiers in Arabic] brought a young woman, my neighbour. They raped her, one after another, beating her in the process. I was in the bush and saw this all in front of me. I was too scared to stop them. When they finished, they just left her there, in a paddle of blood. She survived, but then she started losing weight. She complained to the chiefs, but nothing happened. Many women and girls were raped during the war. Most of them were then divorced by their husbands, or married by old men, who did not mind that they were *keaagh,* already used.

Through such acts the militia men not only destroyed the 'ethnic identity' rooted in women's bodies, but also humiliated Nuer men powerless to protect their women and children. Rape, as in other contemporary conflicts in former Yugoslavia, the Great Lakes, Liberia and Sierra Leone, was used not only as a weapon to exterminate other groups (Jacobs, Jackobson and Marchbank 2000; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Zarkov 2008). As the narrative of Majok suggests, it was also a tool to subdue and emasculate rival men in order to undermine their morale and fighting spirit.

Nuer women and men mentioned grave suffering and profound trauma as a result of war.[104] The suffering was so great that at funerals women would not shed tears. "*Our tears have dried out. We cried too much during the time of wars, we lost so many*

[104] The spread of indiscriminate violence is linked to the relaxation of the Nuer homicide codes by Riek Machar in 1986 (see Hutchinson 1998).

children, we have seen so much death. We have no more tears left," explained a middle-age woman at a funeral of a dignitary in Ler. Violence, death, loss and displacement were narrated in interrupted manner by refugees in Kakuma as well as those who had stayed behind in Sudan. There were unuttered words, tears and prolonged silences. Many women often talked about rapes, violence, torture, hunger, running and fear endured during the wars. NyaDak, in her late 20s, stayed in Ler while her mother went for treatment to Kakuma. She recalled her experiences:

> You were never sure who would come at night to take you, your children, or your food. It could be the Arabs, or the Brigades, or the SPLA soldiers. If you made a mistake of giving all food to one group, the other would accuse you of being a wife of the enemy and they would either make you into their wife [rape] or kill you on the spot.

Caught up in the web of politicised and greed-driven conflicts between adult men, women, children and elders were all exposed to inter- and intra-ethnic violence, coming from every corner, often from those who supposedly were their protectors. When telling their stories filled with struggle, death and suffering, these women often laughed, since laughter, as they told me, was the only way to cope with tremendous loss and pain. Other times, when asked about the war and their journeys through displacement, they would become quiet, or would utter a few dismissive words: "*what is there to tell? It was war, and now it is over.*" It is during these moments of silence, interrupted narratives, quiet nodding of heads that I had to find a meaning and understanding of their unbearable, indescribable and painful experiences. Studying violence, its gendered nature and its painful aftermath became for me a study of unspoken words, sighs and silences (see chapter 3; Jackson 2006).

3.2. Militarised masculinities: From *gaar*, *mut* and *ric* to military training, gun and battalion

I lived with an AK-47
By my side
Slept with one eye open wide
Run
Duck
Play dead
Hide
I've seen my people die like flies

Emmanuel Jal, "Forced to Sin"
Nuer 'Lost Boy' turned rap singer

Nuer gender identities, and particularly masculinities, as Hutchinson argues (1996), have been transformed as a result of colonisation, modern government, education and Christianity. Subsequently, the recent wars, and particularly the south-south violence, farther affected the reconfiguration of Nuer masculinities and resulted both in emergence of 'hyper-masculinities' and weakening of men's position as household 'protectors and providers' (i.e. emasculation of men). I use the term 'hyper-masculinities' to delineate the emergence of a particular type of masculinity that is legitimised through (usually physical and often armed) violence over others (especially women). As in other places riven by conflict (see Richards 2005; Vight 2006; Utas 2003; Cock 1994; White 2007; Samuelson 2007), Nuer everyday life has been militarised through the spread of guns, forced recruitment, indiscriminate violence and spread of nationalist ideologies. The new post 1983 concept of manhood (*wur* - man) was no longer based on *gaar* (the initiation marks on the forehead) received in a group of age-mates (*ric*) and the master of *mut* (spear) (see chapter 4) but, rather, on the experience of liberation struggle, shared military life and possession of a gun (*mac*). The bonding with modern weapons as guns have become a new marker of manhood and a livelihood option for Nuer youth.[105]

Militarisation of southern Sudanese communities was widespread. Almost all young and middle-aged men whom I met in Kakuma and later in Sudan had at some point in their lives experienced military training and taken part in the liberation struggle either in the ranks of SPLA, SSIM or a splinter militia group. In the late 1980s, in need of recruits, John Garang decided to create youth cadres who were trained in military camps in Ethiopia. According to Human Rights Watch estimates there were between 17,000 and 40,000 young recruits (HRW 1994) trained in Ethiopia. They were referred to by Garang as the "Red Army", the "army without fear" or as "Seeds of Sudan": a young generation made to believe they were the future of an independent southern Sudan (see Eggers 2006: 300). It is not completely clear whether the SPLA conducted recruitment of boys mainly for military combat or for education, as it was often claimed by some of the boys themselves (see below) and Dinka elders in Ethiopia and Kakuma (Schechter 2004: 108-109).

[105] See also Leonardi (2008) on this issue among other youth in Sudan.

Kuok introduced in chapter 1 was one of the many young recruits whom I met in Kakuma and later in southern Sudan. I followed his life in the camp and later his return to Sudan (chapter 7). He was a shy, softly- spoken youth of 27. His parents died from kalazar (leishmaniasis) and Kuok and his siblings became orphans at an early age. Joining the SPLA was a means to manage his marginalisation:

> We were by ourselves. The uncle took our sister to his house, but we, the boys, had to manage [by] ourselves. We stayed in Ler, in the town, surviving by ourselves. No one wanted to take us in. It was time of the war and many people were suffering. My life was very hard. One day I made a decision to go to Ethiopia. I heard from the SPLA soldiers that there was education in the [training] camps. With some other boys, we went to the SPLA barracks in Piliny, near Ler, and we told them that we wanted to join. I was hoping that I would get education and that I could help myself and my siblings later on.
>
> There were many children in the recruitment place. Most of them were recruited through the chiefs. SPLA commanders would come to the chiefs and tell them that they needed children, boys, to be sent to education in Ethiopia. Some children chose to go because they were in difficult situation, maybe they were orphans or the family situation was difficult. Others were selected by their family; usually disturbing, trouble-making children were sent to education, as education was not that valued then. Then there were others who were forced [by the SPLA soldiers].
>
> They were maybe 1,500 or more boys, some very small children who could not even walk. We all walked together, through rivers and deserts and then reached Ethiopia.

Gatchang in his early 30s, who was my host in Ler, related a different experience how he and his brother were recruited:

> In 1983, my older brother, Gatkoi, decided that he wanted to join the SPLA. My father was opposed to this idea, but Gatkoi insisted. He wanted to wear a uniform and be a real Nuer man. I was still very small then.
>
> Before joining, he told my father that he wanted to be marked (*gaar* initiation), but my father refused. Later I learned that it was our mother who wanted him to be marked because she wanted to have a son who was a real man (*wur*). Gatkoi insisted that he wanted to get marks so others would recognise that he was a Nuer. In the end, my father agreed and my brother got his marks. Normally, *gaar* initiation is done in a group, an age-set (*ric*). However, because it was the dry season there were no other boys to be marked then and my brother was the only one who received *gaar*. He then went and joined SPLA, got his uniform and a gun. He was sent to Ethiopia for training and came back after four years in 1987.
>
> In that year, I together with my uncle Rock who was about two years older than me were also taken by the soldiers to join the school, as we were told, in Ethiopia. Many children did not want to go, however, the soldiers would come to the house and would take all the boys above the age of seven with them, whether the families were in agreement or not. We were then sent to capture other children.

> I remember that the soldiers told me to go to one of the cattle camps near Thonyor (a small village near Ler) and find some boys. I was running after a small boy who was trying to escape. Finally, I caught him and I was about to take him, when the boy started crying. He was crying very much and calling his father and his mother. He was very small. At that moment, I thought about my own parents and my heart became very very sad. I felt very bad and I let the boy go and told him to run fast so others will not catch him. Many of the parents did not have any idea where the children were going and whether they would ever come back.

The stories represent experiences of thousands of other young boys, especially Dinka and Nuer, who constituted the backbone of the SPLA recruitment strategy. While some children were taken forcibly by soldiers, other parents decided to send their sons to the army not only to support "the national struggle"[106] but also to avoid death and starvation. Kim's narrative presented in section 2 points to the fact that military enlistment became one of the family responsibilities that sons were supposed to fulfill. Their embeddedness in the household economy and roles as future protectors and providers for elderly parents (see chapter 4) underlined their willingness and obligation to join the army. Other men and boys, including Kuok, Gatchang and his brother, joined in willingly as they saw it as an opportunity not only to access education, but also to gain livelihood, manhood, position in the community and/or contest their social marginalisation.

In his analysis of the impact of war on Dinka communities in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, Jok suggests that the condition of living under permanent conflict and political violence is one where "fighting and defending one's family and property is a major preoccupation" (2005: 177). The young recruits such as Kim and Kuok whom I met in Kakuma and Sudan argued that family responsibility was the primary motivation for joining military groups and resorting to the use of guns. Family responsibility is a relatively unexplored proposition in the literature on youth militarisation. Anthropological explanations of youth violence focus rather on tensions inherent in gerontocratic societies (see Kuritimoto and Simonse 1994; Ellis 2001). More recent literature on conflicts in West Africa traces the socio-economic nature of the youth crisis and how marginalised and politicised youth become easily manipulated by

[106] January 2009 conversation with the father of Emmanuel Jal, now a famous rap musician, who originates from Ler. A former high-ranking SPLA officer, he ridiculed the notion of his son ever having been 'lost', explaining that he sent Emmanuel to the army because he wanted him to win fame as a liberator of the southerners. Emmanuel portrays the lives of the young recruits in his music, especially in his last cd entitled "War Child".

political and economic interests (see Richards 1996; O'Brien 1996; Abbink 2005; Keen 2005; Kagwanja 2006).

In southern Sudan, the common representation of the Red Army focuses on the forcible recruitment of the youth and their lack of agency. They are often described as a 'lost generation', pawns in the hands of adult combatants. Others, for example Willis (2002), see "chronic generational tensions" as underlying roots of southern Sudanese youth militarisation. The stories of Kim, Kuok, Gatkoi and Gatchang show, however, a much more complex picture of recruitment strategies, motivation and ways of coping with militarisation experienced by male youth. Intergenerational tensions were, rather, a consequence of youth militarisation, as it will be shown in chapters 6 and 8.

Leonardi suggests that family obligations combined with obligations towards the government were the underlying sources of recruitment to the army (2008: 392). Her discussion does not consider the active agency of the youth themselves, as the example of Gatchang and Gatkoi shows, in subverting, manipulating and taking advantage of the recruitment to achieve their more personal goals of autonomy and manhood. Their story as well as those of Kim, Kuok and others of the circumstances under which young boys and men were recruited or voluntarily joined the army show, however, more diverse interpretations beyond family obligations. As my findings reveal, it was a combination of the overwhelming conditions of insecurity, war and lack of prospects for livelihood – together with family obligations and a new route to manhood and personal independence – that drove male youth into military life. Although there was tremendous pressure exerted on youth during SPLA recruitment campaigns, testimonies of Kuok and Gatchang reveal the actual decision-making and the strategies to avoid or use recruitment to achieve their own goals. This, I would argue, demonstrates youth agency. Despite being constrained by the overwhelming conditions of war, violence, starvation and political and community/household imperatives, some Nuer and other southern Sudanese boys and youth were able to achieve some, albeit limited, degree of choice and to manipulate to some extent the circumstances, including migration in search of education and refugee in order to gain greater autonomy not only from the government, but also from the family.[107]

[107] See chapter 6 for further discussion.

Narratives of the young men, especially the story of Gatkoi and of Wanten below, point to another transformation in gender relations caused by war: the route to manhood. I met Wanted for the first time in January 2007 when I arrived in Bentiu. Lightly built and relatively short for a Nuer, his face is handsome with no marks or dots, the traditional Nuer signs for manhood. Wanten was always smartly dressed in slacks, polished and pointed shoes, pressed shirt, a Kenyan beaded belt and a small New Sudan flag pin in his collar. Born in 1980 near Rubkona in Western Nuerland, in 1987 he was forcibly recruited by the SPLA who came to his parents demanding a son for 'education in Ethiopia'. Together with other chilndre, he was taken to Fundigo camp in Ethiopia where they underwent a nine-month training course, living in military barracks.

> We would go to school in the morning with our AK47 next to us and then in the afternoon we would be trained. This lasted for nine months. Then, those who were bigger would be recruited to fight. Others would wait for their turn in the camp going through the training every day. We were all armed.
>
> We were all boys of different ages from Dinka and Nuer groups. There were no other children around. The conditions in the camp were bad. There was not enough food, we were often starving, there was nothing there. We were all thinking a lot about our families. We missed them very much. They knew nothing about what was happening to us, they knew nothing about where we were. Some of the boys would go crazy; they would sometimes start shooting around. Their minds would go crazy because they were traumatised, they were missing their parents, they were starving. Many of these boys died in the camp, others shoot themselves. We were all children with guns. We all kept thinking…
>
> As a boy or a man you are not supposed to share your thoughts and feelings with others. So we did not talk about fear and loneliness. We kept it to ourselves. These thoughts were just going through our minds.
>
> In the camps, our commanders and trainers were all Dinka and Nuer. They were all Sudanese. They used to tell us: "*We are training you to fight the enemy so that you can chase the enemy from our land. You are the future leaders of Sudan. You will take over our place as we are the old people who will go*." This is what we were told and this is what we believed. We did not think much about the usefulness of the fighting as we were children and we followed what we were told. I was scared at times but then I had to overcome my fears.
>
> I fought for the first time in Pochalla. This was the first time I was shooting at the enemy. At the beginning, I was scared and I was shivering so that I could not even shoot. After five minutes or so I overcame my fears and started shooting. Then it became easier. Some of the boys were given drugs so that they would kill without fear. I never took the drugs because I knew there might be some side effects. After the battle, we did not share our fears and frustrations. You cannot talk about it. You have to be strong as a Nuer boy and man. You cannot show your weakness.

This narrative points to the transformation of both route to manhood and concepts of masculinity. The initiation for boys through scarification (*gaar*) – common among Dinka and Nuer – has been progressively challenged and opposed by educated and baptised youth and by the architects of the national liberation project of 'South Sudan'. SPLA leaders promoted non-ethnic differentiation in the army ranks (see Hutchinson 1996: 270-298), prohibiting scarification and telling them that military training was initiation into manhood as the army battalion had replaced the age-set (*ric*). In 1987, Riek Machar, at that time the SPLA zonal commander of the Western Upper Nile, issued a decree outlawing Nuer scarification.[108] Life in the training camps, as the story of Wanten shows, was portrayed as a way for children to become 'responsible people' (*wic*) able to take care of themselves, which was in Nuer and Dinka cultures a sign of adulthood (Evans-Pritchard 1951; Deng 1972; Hutchinson 1996). One of the young men in Kakuma told me:

> As long as you were recruited as a soldier, you had to be a soldier. I was able to fight and kill people. This meant that I was a responsible person to myself. And the way I was trained, I had more experience than a child who was not trained. There was no other person who could take care of me. I became a responsible person.

Wanten's narrative also reveals how the gun has helped reconfigure Nuer concepts of masculinity. Many of the elderly men and women whom I met in Sudan talked about the past spear fighting between the communities as the 'real wars' where the masculinity of the Nuer and Dinka were tested.[109] An elderly woman from Ler who stayed in Sudan throughout the wars explained the difference between guns and spears:

> In the past, if you as a girl wanted to test whether your boy-friend was a *wur nuära* [real Nuer man], you would ask him to bring you a Dinka cow. But now these boys who run with guns are not real men, they are cowards who kill women and children, and steal property to enrich themselves. It is easy to kill with a gun; you do not have to be responsible [*wic* – i.e. a full man] to do it. The gun shoots by itself, whereas the spear requires you to strategise and dodge.

The new masculine identities of the gun toting youth contribute to inter-generational conflict. The elders often felt that they were no longer able to control the youth who

[108] Although fewer youth were scarified, especially in the urban areas, *gaar* continued among some displaced Nuer in Khartoum and among more isolated rural communities. It was completely outlawed in Kakuma (see chapter 6).
[109] These findings correlate with arguments put forward by Jok and Hutchinson (1999).

have acquired powerful position due to access to guns, resort to extreme violence and disregard of community obligations.

Wanten's experiences of first encounters with the gun and fighting demonstrate how the SPLA, like other armed forces, employed an ideal of 'hyper-masculinity' in its military training in order to encourage aggressiveness, fearlessness and competitiveness. A growing sense of 'entitlement' to the domestic and sexual services of women was also strongly promoted (Hutchinson 1999). Gatkoi, Wanten and other young men recalled the glorification of the power of the gun after their recruitment. As the story of Wanten shows, guns also marked fearlessness and opened up a range of new possibilities, not only in liberating the communities, but also in exercising power over others by looting their property, raping their wives and taking their daughters for free. Prior to the 1991 split, the gun was a symbol of powerful, non-ethnicised and communal (military) masculinity. These ideas were clearly expressed in one of the SPLA graduation songs:

> Even your father, give him a bullet!
> Even your mother, give her a bullet!
> Your gun is your food, your gun is your wife.

Guns were seen as a way to access food through terrorising others and looting their property. The result was a socially-isolated community of male youth, armed and brutally trained not only to kill, but also to torture and loot. This new type of masculinity that emerged might be coined as 'hyper-masculinity' denoting the exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, in particular an emphasis on strength, aggression and domination over women but also over one's elders (see Connell 2000, 2005). The reliance on the gun for survival continues to create major problems for disarmament of local militia and civilian groups in southern Sudan (see Arnold and Alden 2007; McCallum and Okech 2008; see chapter 7).

Yet, the story of Wanten also reveals the traumatic experiences of boys who grew up in isolation from their parents, relatives and kin and were forced to be part of a nationalistic project of the leaders of southern Sudan liberation movement. Their fears, lack of food, unbearable living conditions and separation from their loved ones were

manipulated by the commanders to create cadres of fearless, agressive fighters with nothing to lose.

Figure 4: Military parade in Bentiu, January 2007.

The new masculine identities propagated by the commanders in the camps were further reinforced through John Garang propaganda messages broadcast to southern Sudan, the military training camps in Ethiopia and refugee camps in Kakuma. My Nuer and other southern Sudanese friends and acquaintances often played these taped exhortations at home, at work and in market cafes.[110]

For other men, those who lost properties due to wars, whose wives and children were either stolen, raped or killed, the decline in their ability to secure livelihoods and provide protection for their families, homestead and cattle sparked, argues Hutchinson, a "crisis of masculinity" which manifested itself in rising domestic violence and sexual abuse against women (2000: 12).[111] Her observation is confirmed by women and men in Kakuma and Nuerland who complained about the loss of men's *buom* (strength,

[110] Carol Berger (forthcoming) in her Ph.D study of the Red Army recruits provides insightful analysis of the changing notions of manhood among the Dinka as a result of the nationalist politics of John Garang.
[111] See also Jok and Hutchinson 1999 and Jok 2002 for the impact on Dinka men.

power) to provide for the family. The complaint of NyaChakuoth, an elderly female returnee from Kakuma, was typical:[112]

> Look at them, they are not men any longer. They cannot protect us. They are the first ones to run to the bush when the rebels came. When my husband was beaten by the Bul militia, he cried like a child and told them straightaway where our food supplies were. We lost all our food. He was really useless.

The spread of gender-violence against women that took place especially after the 1991 SPLA split can be seen partially as a result of the emasculation of men. I would support Henrietta Moore's arguments about 'thwarting' or emasculation of particular gender identities. She explains that "thwarting can be understood as the inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position, resulting in a crisis, real or imagined, of self-representation and/or social evaluation" (Moore 1994: 66). In the case of Nuer male youth and men, thwarting is linked to their marginalisation and impoverishment due to war and their inability to receive expected rewards or recognition from assuming their *wutni nuäri* (Nuer masculinity). It results in their emasculation. As they see themselves as unable to provide protection and secure livelihoods for their families and protect their women from being kidnapped, raped or killed (see setion 3.1), they resort to violence. They direct it towards other women, but also their own women, resulting in an increase in domestic violence which was often narrated by Nuer women and men. The perpetuation of this violence continues, as we shall see, in refugee camps and after return (see chapters 6 and 8).

3.3. Femininities and agency reconfigured: Violated women, 'luggage women' and daughters of the AK47

Women's position and roles during the civil war were more varied and complex than is suggested by the standard portrayal of victims of violence in the feminist literature which reports widespread socialisation of men to be aggressive and women to be submissive (Turshen and Twarigaramariya 1998; Turshen 2001). Instead, they took up arms alongside their male relatives in the war against the Arab enemies, often joining

[112] This will be further discussed in chapters 7-8.

the SPLA as combatants (Fitzgerald 2002) or supporters.[113] They carried the wounded and luggage and provided food and other domestic services. Although according to John Garang's rhetoric, women's primary responsibility was to preserve the future generations and stay out of the frontlines, some girls were recruited. According to the Nuer women and men who went to Ethiopia, in 1986 the SPLA created a female battalion, *Ketiba Benet*. Three hundred girls were trained in the Ethiopian camps alongside the Red Army male recruits (McCullum and Okech 2008: 47; HSBA 2008: 2). The battalion fought only once. "*Too many women and girls died and SPLA realised it is better to keep them in the barracks to help us, the men*," commented a refugee who had been a young recruit. A few of the Nuer women refugees in Kakuma went first with their husbands to Ethiopia where they were subsequently trained as soldiers. The vast majority lived around the military barracks in the training camps and supported the male soldiers through the provision of domestic and sexual services. Some of the militia groups also recruited women. Based on pre-registration of women combatants carried out under the disarmament plan of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), there were some 3,600 women combatants in 2005 (HSBA 2008: 5).

The post-1991 inter-and intra-community violence further undermined the social position of women. Women bodies and their blood became vehicles of male confrontation and the nationalist struggle. During previous inter-community feuds women did not take part in the fighting, but protected wounded fighters. As narratives of elders suggest, they were perceived as protectors and saviours who would accompany brothers, fathers and husbands to local battles and if their men were injured would cover their bodies and shelter them from the enemy's attack. If a fighter, even from the enemy's side ran inside a house, he was considered to have reached a place of sanctuary and could not be targeted by the opposing side. Since the rules of non-targetting of women in inter-community feuds were abandoned and women became the targets of the ethnicised violence, their protective abilities were taken away. Elderly Nuer women and men commented on the changed tactics and social position of women. Joy, a widow in her late forties, explained:

[113] These were new roles for women, especially for the Nuer who traditionally did not take part in the military struggle. See below.

> In the past, we, women, relied on the men to protect us. The men would go to fight the Arabs, and women would migrate to a safe place and stay behind preparing food and water for the soldiers. The men were the ones fighting the enemy and women relied on the men for protection. But then things changed. The Arabs started stealing women and children, and then the Nuer started fighting Dinka and each other. It was very bad to see the fighting between your own people. At the same time, you cannot escape because you belong there.

Women became not only targets of gender-violence and ethnic annihilation, as discussed in section 3.1, they were also less able to reach safe havens. Hutchinson suggests that the primodialist turn in Nuer ethnicity was prompted by the northern military strategies of 'divide and rule' (2000:13). It also reflects the global trend towards women and children becoming the victims of militarised violence. The gendered nature of violence in the government-SPLA war and, more significantly, in south-south conflict, contributed to the displacement and reformulation of gender identities. El Jack (2007) analyses the effects of the oil-induced displacement on the lives of Sudanese refugee women in Uganda. She notes the gender-based violence that these women endured during the various conflicts, with many suffering numerous rapes at the hands of Arab soldiers, SPLA troops and other southern rebels. As my data suggests, this in turn undermined the position of women in the community, leaving them more vulnerable than men, often trapped in Sudan as they were less mobile.

Militarisation of southern Sudanese society spread across communities and households beyond the military ranks and into women's realms.[114] Most boys and men joined the bush and embraced the gun as symbol of their new manhood as it became normal for civilians to possess guns. In Kakuma and Sudan, women and children recounted stories of owning guns, using them to defend themselves and to wreak revenge on enemies.[115] Young children would carry guns larger than themselves to protect herds in the cattle camps. Women and girls used weapons as a means of protection, to exert power over others and to exercise some autonomy. A 16-year-old girl from Akobo boasted to me about her mastery of the gun and that she preferred this to education: "*it is easier to be rich when you have a gun. You can just shoot and you get what you want. With school*

[114] The Small Arms Survey estimates that there are between 1.9 and 3.2 million small arms in Sudan, with two thirds in the hands of civilians, 20 percent by the Khartoum government, the remainder between the SPLA and other southern militias (2007: 2). See also Arnold and Alden 2007 and McCullum and Okech 2008.

[115] Women started using guns in their domestic disputes. In Kakuma, I heard of two cases of women, who while quarrelling with their co-wives shot them with guns belonging to their husbands.

is too much trouble". When I expressed my surprise, Nyadak added *"when I go back to Sudan I will be a killer … because I have to kill all the Arabs and revenge my family*." This narrative reveals how women were not merely passive victims of military conflict but participated actively in instigating and perpetuating violence. They also saw themselves not only as family members to be protected but also those who were in charge of protecting others. This illustrates the different views that women hold about their own position within the family and the community. Despite gender equality education in the camp and numerous encouragements for girls to pursue schooling, Nyadak abandoned school, was married to a man from Central Nuerland with whom she had a baby-girl. I saw her one day in the camp cooking for her husband. She was very subdued and initially did not want to talk to me. Finally, she smiled and told me: "*Remember what I told you about the gun? If my husband abuses me, I will also kill him! War made me not afraid of men!".* Hence, such war experiences for women marked a transformation in their self-esteem. Despite traumatic experiences, women were (becoming) militant in claiming their rights and respect. These narratives point also to the profound militarisation of the community, household's and personal relationships. They also show how femininities were being transformed as a result of ethnicised violence. This militarisation penetrated all segments of society and reflected itself in Nuer naming practices: for example, NyaKlang means "daughter of the AK47."

Women also actively contributed to the war effort as perpetrators of violence. Their well-known powers to influence male kin through shaming (see Hutchinson 1996, 2000) have been widely exercised during the conflict. Riek Machar acknowledged the power of Nuer women to shame their male relatives through songs which had a substantial influence on the recruitment of soldiers into the SPLA (Hutchinson 1996: 157). The story of Gatkoi (see above) also shows the influence of mothers in their sons joining the army. During my stay in Western Upper Nile, I often heard women praising through songs and stories the heroic war efforts of their sons, brothers and husbands. It was only when the soldiers started to lose lives in the battle and many of the sons did not come home that women and girls changed their songs and refused the courtship of soldiers ("I would not marry a ghost" see Hutchinson 1996: 159).

Women's songs did not only encourage men to join the fighting ranks but they also incited other women to violence, particularly during the Dinka and Nuer inter- and intra-fighting. Jok (1998, 1999) and Hutchinson (2000) both talk about the role of women in fuelling inter-community violence, encouraging male relatives to raid cattle and revenge deaths. Kim, the 'lost boy' from Ler (see above), during the flight from Ethiopia saw women encouraging other men to fight and themselves shooting enemy children.

During the war women took on more community responsibilities and leadership roles. In Ler, I met two elderly women, who had stayed in Sudan throughout the conflicts and been nominated as community chiefs in charge of food distribution and provision of services for orphans, widows and people with disabilities. Their role was to pass messages and concerns of women to male paramount chiefs, the SPLA military command and counter-insurgency groups. When inter-community violence spiralled out of control, women took on peace-making roles. Women in exile became particularly active in pro-peace campaigning. Many of these initiatives took place in Kakuma. Some women warned husbands they would not cook, have sex or "produce children for the South" if they did not stop fighting (Itto 2006: 2). Others used nakedness to shame their male relatives. In 2002, a group of southern Sudanese women marched naked on the streets of Nairobi to protest the ongoing inter-community fighting in southern Sudan (see Itto 2006: 2; HSBA 2008: 2; McCallum and Okech 2008). Several women's diaspora groups organised themselves across ethnic divides to demand peace. The Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace, New Sudan Women's Federation and New Sudan Women's Association achieved international prominence, drawing attention to the forgotten conflict. Some leading female peacemakers were eventually included in the Machakos peace negotiations but their role in drafting the peace agreement was minimal. Anne Itto, a former minister and now an MP in the southern Sudan national assembly, complains that there was no mentioning of the suffering and the role of women in the war in the final version of the peace agreement (2006: 2-4). Many Nuer women in Kakuma and in Sudan expressed their dissatisfaction: "*'It was not our peace, it is the peace of the men, of soldiers. Our [women's] suffering and dead children were not recognised.*" Not until the drafting of the southern Sudanese interim constitution was there specific mention of gender issues (see chapter 8).

3.4. Changes in rights discourse and the institution of marriage

In addition to reconfiguration of Nuer femininities and masculinities, discourse of rights associated with the social position of women and men also underwent transformation during the war. While men were expected to "maintain the war front" women's primary duty was "keeping up the reproductive front" (see Jok 1999; Hutchinson 2000; HSBA 2008). Throughout the conflict, military and community leaders continuously urged women to continue giving birth as their contribution to the struggle. "*We were losing many people, many soldiers in the war against the Arabs, and many children were dying due to bad conditions. Women had to give birth more often, this was their duty,*" the commissioner of Ler explained.

As a result, women often had large families whom they needed to support themselves as their husbands were either in refugee camps or fighting in 'the bush'.[116] My host in Ler, a mother of five children, told me:

> You see, during the war we had to give birth to many children, the Sudanese woman is tired now. She has to work so hard. Now, that the war is over, we do not want so many children, maybe two or three; they go to school and get education and this is how they will make us famous. Not through guns and struggle.

Jok's studies among the Dinka show that during the war, weaning taboos were not respected and women had to shorten gaps between pregnancies (Jok 1998; Hutchinson -2000).[117] Since men were in the bush, women reported being transferred between different men, sometimes family members, other times unrelated men, in order to conceive.[118] When abducted by the enemy, they were often taken as wives by powerful commanders and had to fulfill their reproductive responsibility as captives.

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[116] Many women had between 10-14 children, often losing more than half due to diseases and conflict. On reproductive health issues among the Dinka women in Bahr al-Ghazal see Jok (1998, 1999).

[117] Several taboos persist among the Nuer and Dinka with regards to weaning periods. Women during those times are regarded as 'polluting' and they are not allowed to drink milk or engage in sexual intercourse (see Hutchinson 1980, 1996). Children are weaned at the age of 2 or 3 years old when the infant is able to walk and is no longer perceived as *riem* (blood), but instead acquires a status of a *gat* (child). During the war, the nursing period was often reduced to one year or less.

[118] A study of female combatants by Geneva Call points out that some travelled to the frontlines in order to get pregnant by their husbands (2008: 3).

Marriage and sexual services are often used by women and girls in conflict zones as means of survival (Devon and Gervais 2007). Some females use their gendered position as women to access greater security and well-being. In Sierra Leone, as Utas (2005b) and Devon and Gervais (2007) show, girls negotiated their insecurity through marriages to powerful commanders who not only provided them with greater access to food but also minimised the risk of sexual violence from others.

In southern Sudan, many women who stayed behind talked about 'protection and convenience marriages' to local commanders and soldiers in the absence of their own husbands. Nyajuc who stayed in Ler during the war told me:

> We had to give birth to children, our husbands were in the bush, so what were we supposed to do? It was better to go to the barracks, at least there you not only get a child but sometimes also some food, or maybe the man will protect you from other rebels.

This reflects both agency and resourcefulness through the use of their gender and bodies in the search for protection, power, status and survival.

Women's reproductive contributions to the liberation struggle are, however, not acknowledged in public discourse in post-war southern Sudan. During the SPLM campaign in Ler, the regional representative praised women's war role, thanking them for their services for the heroic soldiers, including cooking and carrying the wounded and luggage. Their reproductive contribution was downplayed and often ignored, although it had tremendous consequences for their health and position in the society. "*Due to war, women do not give birth to children any more. There were too many children, too many women taken by force then*," commented Theresa Nyangule, the Women Union's representative in Ler. "*First the men came and made you into their wives,*[119] *and now the husbands show up and divorce us*", complained another widow who was taken by the Bul militia during the war.[120] I will come back to these issues in chapter 8. For now it suffices to say that as a result of war and violence men acquired greater rights over women's reproductive capabilities and were able to claim sexual and domestic services in the name of women's responsibility in the war to "maintain the

[119] The word 'rape' does not exist in Nuer. The concept of 'rape' is expressed through the metaphor of 'becoming somebody's wife, or being taken by force.'
[120] See also HSBA 2008.

reproductive front". Hutchinson points out that "women's status as independent agents in men's eyes has declined in the context of militarised glorification of the raw power of the gun" (2000: 12).

In addition to the changing reproductive rights discourses, war affected also the marriage institution. First, the marriageable age for girls and boys was lowered significantly. Girls in southern Sudan (Nuer and Dinka) had formerly married much earlier than boys. A 15- or 16-year-old girl was considered by the Nuer to be of marriageable age as soon as "she had breasts and had had her first menstruation." Before the civil wars, young men would have to attain maturity, usually in their late 20s or early 30s to be allowed by their fathers to marry (see also Evans-Pritchard 1951; Hutchinson 1980, 1990, 1996). This had to do with the ability of a man to provide for the household and to fulfill his socially determined roles of a responsible man and father.

During the war, many girls were married much earlier, sometimes even before the first menstruation, as parents were worried of losing potential bridewealth due to fighting and imminent threat of death. In addition, many parents complained that their daughters were 'forced' (raped) or taken away by soldiers 'for free' without any bridewealth. Parents also insisted that sons marry earlier (many men got married in their late teens) as they were afraid that they would be killed in the war, recruited or migrate in search of jobs, education or refuge. Early reproduction was thought to be necessary in order to sustain the household, *cieng* and community existence.

As the number of available young men declined and their wealth perished, girls were often married either by commanders who had the cattle or by old men who remained in the villages. Due to very early marriages and also as a result of lack of food, constant flight, stress and trauma many young women unable to deliver children. Many were thus divorced or abandoned by their husbands and the husbands' families, leaving them with no security (see chapter 8).

The second civil war affected women and men differently, not only in terms of their access to migration and refuge, but also in altering their social (gender) identities, rights and position in the community. Lene Hansen and Louise Olsson have argued that

"security is gendered through the political mobilisation of masculine and feminine identities that are linked to practices of militarism and citizenship" (2004: 406). Because of their physical and sexual vulnerability, women and girls experience violence and insecurity differently from men (Cockburn 2001; Moser and Clark 2001; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Denov and Garvais 2007; Zarkov 2008). The changing nature of conflict and violence among the southern Sudanese which emerged after the SPLA split directly affected the production, sustenance and fostering of specific ethnicised and militarised femininities and masculinities. The new warfare, proliferation of guns and abandonment of ethics resulted in women (and children) shifting from "military assets" to "military targets" (Jok and Hutchinson 1999). Militarisation contributed to the re-configuration of gender identities with the emergence of hyper-masculinities among some men, emasculation of others, while reconfiguring and often undermining the position of women. Yet, women and girls managed to exercise their modest agency in order to cope with wartime violence and brutality.

As Hyndman and de Alwis note, "membership in a particular nation shapes one's political, economic, and social locations at least as much as one's gender identity, and in ways specifically articulated *through* gender differences" (2003: 58). In recent decades there has been extensive analysis of links between gender and nation, contextualising these relations within post-colonial societies. Gender has been identified as the key factor in the construction and reproduction of ethno-nationalist ideologies (Enloe 1989; Jayawardena 1986; Moghadam 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997). As discussed in chapter 2, gender identities are inter-connected and mutually constitutive. Women are often positioned as care-takers, home-makers, bearers of 'tradition' and national culture, while men are portrayed as protectors of the family the nation, and their properties [women and children] (Moghadam 1994). War and conflict further alter, contest and re-shape concepts of masculinities and femininities. The process of militarisation is both determined and determines how gender relations are practiced and negotiated and how masculinities and femininities are defined (Cock 1994, 2001; Enloe 1983; Hutchinson and Jok 1999; El-Bushra 2000a; Jacobs, Jacobson and Marchbank 2000; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Korac 2004; Samuelson 2007).

As demonstrated, both Nuer women and men played key roles in the militarisation of society and gender identities. As Cock argues, "militarisation is a society process that involves the mobilisation of resources for war on political, economic and ideological levels" (1994: 153). Gender identities are accentuated, exaggerated and essentialised in the context of war and conflict, with men being perceived as the protectors of women and the nation, while women are portrayed as dependable, vulnerable, inactive and passive, in need of their men to protect them and their 'home' (Samuelson 2007). As the case of the Nuer women and men suggests, actual experiences of women and men are much more complex, revealing agency of both women and men and their ability to navigate through the warzones.

4. CONCLUSION

The wind, *jiom*, that brought the second civil war to the south, particularly Nuerland, left communities devastated and dispersed and altered gender identities, institutions and ideologies. The impact of inter- and intra-ethnic violence which resulted from the Garang-Machar split in 1991 marked a turning point for Nuer-Dinka relations and concepts of ethnicity and (gender) identity. The ethnicised violence followed across borders, and in 1996, fighting took place between Dinka and Nuer in Kakuma.

This chapter demonstrates that there are contradictions around changes in gender relations resulting from violent conflicts. My findings add new perspectives to the literature on the gender effects of wars which often focus on the victim-perpetrator debate. I argue that war and conflict open up different possibilities for disempowering some women (and some men) and empowering some men (and some women). In Nuerland, militarisation led to reconfiguration of gender identities, rights and institutions. Inter- and intra-community violence resulted in the reconfiguration of the relationship between ethnicity and gender (see Hutchinson 2000b). Nuer (and Dinka) women became boundary-makers of new ethnic identities shaped by men, often through violence inflicted on women's bodies. Women's roles in the war, however, were more fluid and multidimensional with some actively being engaged as perpetrators and supporters of violence. This finding correlates with Devon and Gervais's study of female combatants in Sierra Leone who argue that women and girls roles in conflict zones go beyond being victims of violence, but rather, as, involve a

myriad of positions as perpetrators, actors, porters, commanders, domestic and sex slaves, spies and human shields (2007: 886). Nuer women have been able to exercise some limited agency to contribute to war efforts, resist and survive in the conflict zones despite having bore the brunt of the violence.

These new forms of Nuer masculinities and femininities combined with new forms of Nuer mobility and differentiated access to migration and refuge for boys, girls, women and men went through new transformations, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, in refugee camps. Fragmented and dispersed households and communities experienced different changes in gender identities, ideologies and institutions. Changes in Nuer cultural institutions and the weakening of established coping mechanisms have affected women's and men's ability to regulate power and gender relations, often leaving women in more disadvantaged position. Even though, as my data demonstrates, war and conflict have mixed consequences for gender relations, women's exercise of agency, due to their position as women and vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse, has been much more constrained than that of boys and men.

Figures 5-7. Kakuma refugee camp, 2007.

CHAPTER 6

MAI:[121] SEASON OF DISPLACEMENT

BECOMING 'MODERN' IN KAKUMA:

A GENDERED AND GENERATIONAL PROCESS

> What was life like in Kakuma? Was it life? There was debate about this. On the one hand, we were alive, which meant that we were living a life, that we were eating and could enjoy friendships and learning and could love. But we were nowhere. No matter the meaning of the word, the place was not a place. It was a kind of purgatory…
>
> Valentino Achak Deng cited in Eggers 2006: 373

On arrival at the Kakuma refugee camp – located in dry savannah rangeland of Turkana nomads – one encounters football fields with crowds of multi-national refugee youth. Across the road are the high fences and barbed wire of the UNHCR compound with its prison-like lights and security guards. 'Welcome to Kakuma Refugee Camp!' reads the sign on the gate to the NGO compound. Everywhere there are slogans meant to educate the residents: 'Women rights are Human Rights'; 'Ten days of activism against gender-violence'; 'Women are good decision-makers'. There are constant announcements of workshops and many refugees were too busy to talk to me as they 'have workshops'. Lony, a 'lost boy' recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1987 and taken to Ethiopia, described his experience after arriving in Kakuma in 1992:

> When Mengistu fell and the Sudanese were expelled from Ethiopia, we arrived in Kakuma. This is where we found the real refugee life. We were put into a camp managed by UNHCR. They put all the minors under the responsibility of Redda Barnen [Swedish Save the Children], gave us food and opened a school. We were divided into groups within our communities. We first lived in zone one, together with others [ethnic groups]. But in 1996 when the fighting between the Dinka started burning our [Nuer] homes, we ran to UNHCR. They segregated us into different zones, and Nuer got their own zone five.
>
> I began to live a different life [from military life in Ethiopia]: church, school and sport. I was also a youth leader in the community and in the church from 1997. I was the deputy youth leader in the whole camp. I got a big responsibility then: catechist, altar boy, youth leader, and I was now engaged and could not do any

[121] *Mai* corresponds to the dry season from mid-September to mid-March when Nuer move from villages to cattle camps. I use the metaphor of *mai* to represent life in a refugee camp, to which Nuer moved intentionally or unintentionally, in search of protection, security and education due to conflict in Sudan. Kakuma's ecological conditions are comparable to Nuerland.

> wrong things. I became now another model in the community. The UN also taught us about other things, like women and children rights. *Ca ker* [I have awoken/seen light]. Because of the UN, school and church, Nuer in Kakuma became different. We are somehow 'modern' like you, civilised and pro-women.

1. INTRODUCTION: 'MODERNITY', GLOBAL HUMANISM, GENDER AND GENERATIONS

For refugees waiting in limbo for years, sometimes decades, the experience of displacement and life in refugee camps is life-changing. Encounters between the 'local Nuer' traumatised by war and displacement (see chapter 5) and the global humanitarian enterprise within Kakuma entailed engagement with the complex, overlapping cultural processes and material structures of a particular 'modernity'. Kakuma was not the first encounter with 'modernity' for the Nuer. Colonialism, missionary proselytising, government, markets, infrastructure, guns, modern armies and oil companies brought, as in other parts of Africa, Enlightenment-inspired notions of 'individuality', 'progress', 'order', 'rationality' and 'civilisation' (see Hutchinson 1996; Hodgson 2001a). In Kakuma, the modernity experience for refugees has been different. It is the rarely recognised and discussed encounter between the 'localised and deteritorialised refugee' and the global UN humanitarianism which, combined with diasporic connections created through resettlement programmes, has opened new possibilities for 'change', 'development', 'progress' and 'empowerment'.

In this chapter I examine how experiences of life in a refugee camp and encounters with 'a modernity' have (re)shaped Nuer gender relations. I argue that the Nuer in Kakuma experience 'modernity' of a particular form. It is a dislocated, gendered, ambivalently chosen and experienced through a profound contemporary form of hierarchical set of relations defined by the encounter between the UN system and refugees. Because refugees are (presumably) temporarily outside the "national order of things" (Malkki 1996; Horst 2006), they are unable to claim their citizenship rights and protection from their governments but are subjected to a 'refugee regime', which includes national and international institutions, law, policy and practice that have been put in place to address "issues of refugees" (Van Hear 1998a: 342). Its diverse actors include the UN, host governments, implementing agencies and donors.

I analyse this particular form of 'modernity' at three levels. First, modernity in Kakuma is structural, imposed through the implementation of a refugee regime and the design, residence pattern, population make-up and creation of space. This is reinforced by camp management structures set up by the humanitarian organisations introducing education and health services and ideas around human rights and gender equality. This particular experience of Kakuma as a 'modern place' was linked to specific experiences of emplacement after return to Sudan (discussed in chapter 7). Second, modernity has also unfolded as a result of access to global communication and technology and through resettlement in Europe, the Americas and Australia. It is manifested not only by use of modern technologies and western fashion styles but also in the ideas that the Nuer hold about themselves and their social world. Third, modernity in Kakuma is gendered and generational, experienced differently by women and men, the young and the elderly. As part of the continuous process of displacement, it has contributed to the transformation of gender relations. Here modernity represents not only structures and infrastructure, but also ideas and identities which constitute part of social imaginings (Taylor 2002). In this way, gendered modernity experience resulted in what Ferguson (1999) called, a form of consciousness, rather than an objective condition of exposure to market forces among the Nuer.

In section two of the chapter, I develop the first two analytical levels of modernity production in Kakuma. Section three is concerned with the effects of gendering the camp, gendered experiences and the impacts of modernity – with particular focus on reconfiguration of masculinities and femininities. In section four, I analyse the consequences of modernity for altering structures of gender and inter-generational power: What are the different experiences of young women and men in their encounters with the international refugee regime? How do the new opportunities for the young impact the inter-generational and gender power and gender ideas? What are the consequences of these transformations on gender asymmetries?

The chapter contributes to the growing literature on globalisation and modernity, which looks at the disunity within unity (Berman 1982) and local re-interpretations and creation of multiple forms of 'modernities'[122] (see Breckenridge at al. 2002; Ferguson

[122] See chapter 2.

1999; Ong 1999; Hodgson 2001a; Mills 2002; Gable 2006; Lindsay and Miescher 2003). I seek to extend debates on what constitutes the nature of this encounter. Much of the literature on African modernities situates seemingly 'traditional' cultural practices – witchcraft, ethnicity, and 'autochthony' – as recent responses to a globalising capitalism and emergence of the rationalising modern nation-state (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997; Piot 1999; Weiss 1996; Werbner 2002). I wish to understand how 'modernisation' for the contemporary Nuer has been created through the imposition of and encounters with global humanitarianism. In particular, I am interested in the impact of this modernity on gender relations and identities, as part of the process of transformation in gender relations among the Nuer due to wartime displacement. I locate this debate in the slowly growing literature on the effects of modernities on gender relations (see chapter 2). This chapter also contributes to the debates on the impact of refugee encampment on gender identities, particularly on masculinities, and the experience of young girls – which are almost completely absent from refugee studies.

2. KAKUMA AND CREATION OF 'MODERNITY': *CIENG MI PAI BEN*

Figure 8. NGO compound, Kakuma, 2007

As Nuer men and women told me, Kakuma is a place marked by suffering and hardship but also by the arrival of a 'modern' mode of life. Nyakuol, a widow in her forties who had been displaced for 15 years in Ethiopia and then in Kakuma, described changes in

the camp: "*Ke Kakuma, duëlgora*, UN, *duëlkuoth*, women rights *a thin. Gaatkon wa nhiam, entedi, nyiiri ke dholi nuäri ti ngac ke ngoani, teke* education. *Ke Kakuma, cieng mi pai ben* (in Kakuma, a new custom/mode of life arrived)."[123] Nuer often interpreted it as arrival of 'modernity' and 'civilisation' into their lives. English words 'modern' and 'civilised' were often used by young Nuer to distinguish their new identities and modes of behaviour from those who had stayed behind in Nuerland. The Nuer metaphor often used by my respondents to describe these 'new' identities was '*nei ti cike ker'*. This signifies people who have awoken and have seen light, which many of the Nuer, like Lony, associated with literacy, Christianity, awareness of human rights and gender equality. The Nuer interpreted it as a distinction that produced new aspirations and identities among women and men and impacted conjugal relations. Young girls, those who attend school, participate in community activities and learn English were referred to as 'knowledgeable and educated' (*nyiiri nuäri ti ngac ke ngoani*). The camp was a site of forging new 'modern' gender identities, which were often described by the Nuer, and confirmed by humanitarian workers, as 'educated civilised pro-women men' and 'new empowered women'. I explore these experiences of *nei ti cike ker* (people who have awoken) in the encounter with the modernising structures of a refugee regime committed to gender mainstreaming.

2.1. Camp as a space of 'modernity'

Located in the north-western part of Kenya, Turkana District in the Rift Valley is at the crossroads of Kenyan and Sudanese pastoralist routes. Kakuma Refugee Camp represents a meeting point of different worlds.[124] For some it is a site of UN humanitarianism and a place of refuge, while for others it opens up possibilities to access education and business. For the majority, it is a temporary waiting place. Located 127 kilometres south of the Kenya-Sudan border and 120 kilometres north of the district capital, Lodwar, it has a dry and hot climate. It is a harsh environment with annual median rainfall of some 100mm but with extreme variability. Following the collapse in 1990 of the military dictatorship of Siad Barre in Somalia and the demise of

[123] "In Kakuma, there are schools, UN, churches, women rights. Our children go forward/progress. Now Nuer girls and boys are knowledgeable and educated. In Kakuma, a new Nuer custom/mode of value has arrived. Things are done differently from the past."

[124] Prior to the influx of refugees, Kakuma was an insignificant village in Turkana district with a population of around 8,000 , primarily pastoralist Turkana. It is estimated that some 447,000 Turkana nomadic pastoralist are indigenous to the region (see Schechter 2004: 44).

the Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991, Kenya witnessed an unprecedented influx of populations seeking refuge. As Kenyan refugee policy shifted to confining refugees in camps away from urban economic centres[125] (de Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 205), the Kakuma camp received its first Sudanese refugees in 1992.[126] By 2006, it had become the second largest refugee camp in Kenya[127] and one of the world's largest. When I first arrived in Kakuma in April 2006, the refugee population was reported to be 92,000[128] comprised of nine different nationalities: Sudanese (75 percent), Somalis (some 21 percent), Ethiopians (three percent), Rwandese, Burundian, Congolese, Eritreans and Ugandans (UNHCR Kakuma 2006). Registered camp residents include some who have settled in cities, despite the Kenyan policy of refugee encampment. High numbers of Sudanese, Ethiopians and Somalis reside in Nairobi, Kitale and Eldoret (see Campbell 2006), some returning to the camp during the 'headcount' exercises carried out regularly by UNHCR in order to determine the size of 'beneficiary population'. In September 2006, I witnessed an increased traffic of *matatus* (mini-buses) and buses bringing refugees to Kakuma and then carrying them back to the cities with collected food rations. Refugees continued return to the camp also to maintain their refugee status in Kenya which guaranteed their legality and access to services in the camp, access to education in Kenyan schools as well as medical services. Those who reside undocumented suffer from constant fear of potential deportation, limited possibilities to access services available to nationals and documented foreign residents and potential employment.[129]

Its multi-ethnic character means that populations from different groups live among each other in ways far different from the interactions in a 'home village'. At the time of fieldwork 34 Sudanese ethnic groups were represented in the camp, with Dinka and Nuer dominating (49,000 and 7,000 in 2006, respectively). The heterogeneous

[125] For a discussion of refugee policy in Kenya, see Verdirame 1999; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005.
[126] The first camp was opened in Lokichoggio in 1991. With the influx of Sudanese, it was transferred to Kakuma in 1992.
[127] In 2006, Kakuma was hosting some 40 percent of the total refugee population in Kenya with 60 percent in Dadaab Camp, located near the Somali border in north-eastern Kenya. Due to ongoing civil war in Somalia the Dadaab camp now shelter almost 250,000, mostly Somalis (HRW 2008b).
[128] During my follow-up visit to Kakuma in September 2007, the camp population was 75,000. Due to repatriation of Sudanese and influx of more Somalis, in August 2008, the camp population was estimated to be 51,000 with 13,000 Sudanese.
[129] For further discussion see UNHCR policy on urban refugees (UNHCR 2009). See reports on the precarious situation of undocumented refugees in urban areas. For Nairobi (Campbell 2006; ODI 2010; HRW 2002, 2009)

character of the camp was also due to the presence of the local Turkana who, until the early 2000s used to live within the camp among refugees. Due to increased insecurity, escalating economic interdependence and tensions between the Turkana and refugees – a situation common in host/refugee relations (cf. Black 1994; Harrell-Bond 1986; Landau 2003; Grabska and Al-Sharmani 2009) – the Turkana were ordered by the Kenyan authorities to leave the camp. Nevertheless, they continue economic activities. Many, including children, work as servants for refugee households while others sell water, firewood and alcohol. Some younger girls and women offer sexual services to the predominantly male refugee population.[130]

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, there has been organised repatriation of Sudanese assisted by UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the governments of host countries. Many have returned using their own means. By January 2010, some 320,000[131] Sudanese refugees[132] had returned to southern Sudan from Uganda, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya, among them 155,000 with UNHCR's assistance (UNHCR 2010). However, new Sudanese asylum seekers continue to arrive in Kakuma in search of education, protection from gender-based violence or fleeing the general insecurity prevalent in parts of southern Sudan.[133]

Forging of ethnic and inter-cultural identity within the camp was partially through its layout. The population was 'managed' through the design of the camp divided into sections, zones and groups (see maps 3 and 4). Refugees were accommodated according to their nationality and, after 1996 clashes between Dinka and Nuer, also on the basis of ethnicity. Kakuma I was divided into zones 1 to 6; Zones 1 to 4 and 6 were predominantly Sudanese; while Zone 5 was occupied by a mixture of nationalities.

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[130] I saw groups of Turkana girls as young as ten in the bars, restaurants and cafes frequented by the Ethiopian and Somali communities. Some Ethiopians narrated stories of sexual services provided by these children for as little as 20 KSh ($0.30) or in exchange for food. Turkana prostitutes were particularly apparent among the Ethiopian community where men outnumbered women by nine to one.

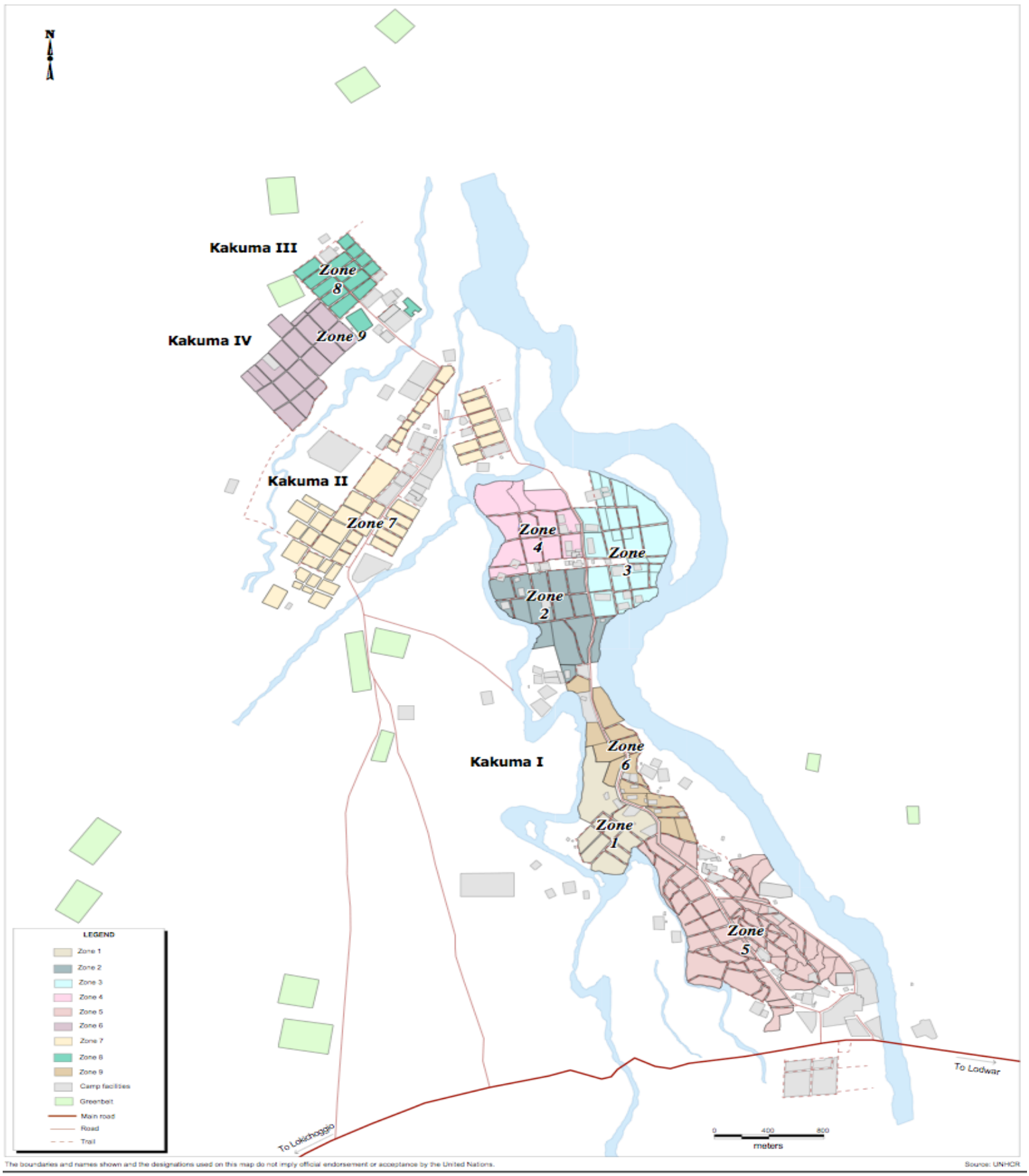
[131] These estimates are based on the figures of those who left the camps, rather than who arrived in Sudan. As my data suggests, many Sudanese instead remained in exile often moving to cities or other host countries.

[132] Refugees included those settled in six refugee camps and those settled among local population in rural and urban areas.

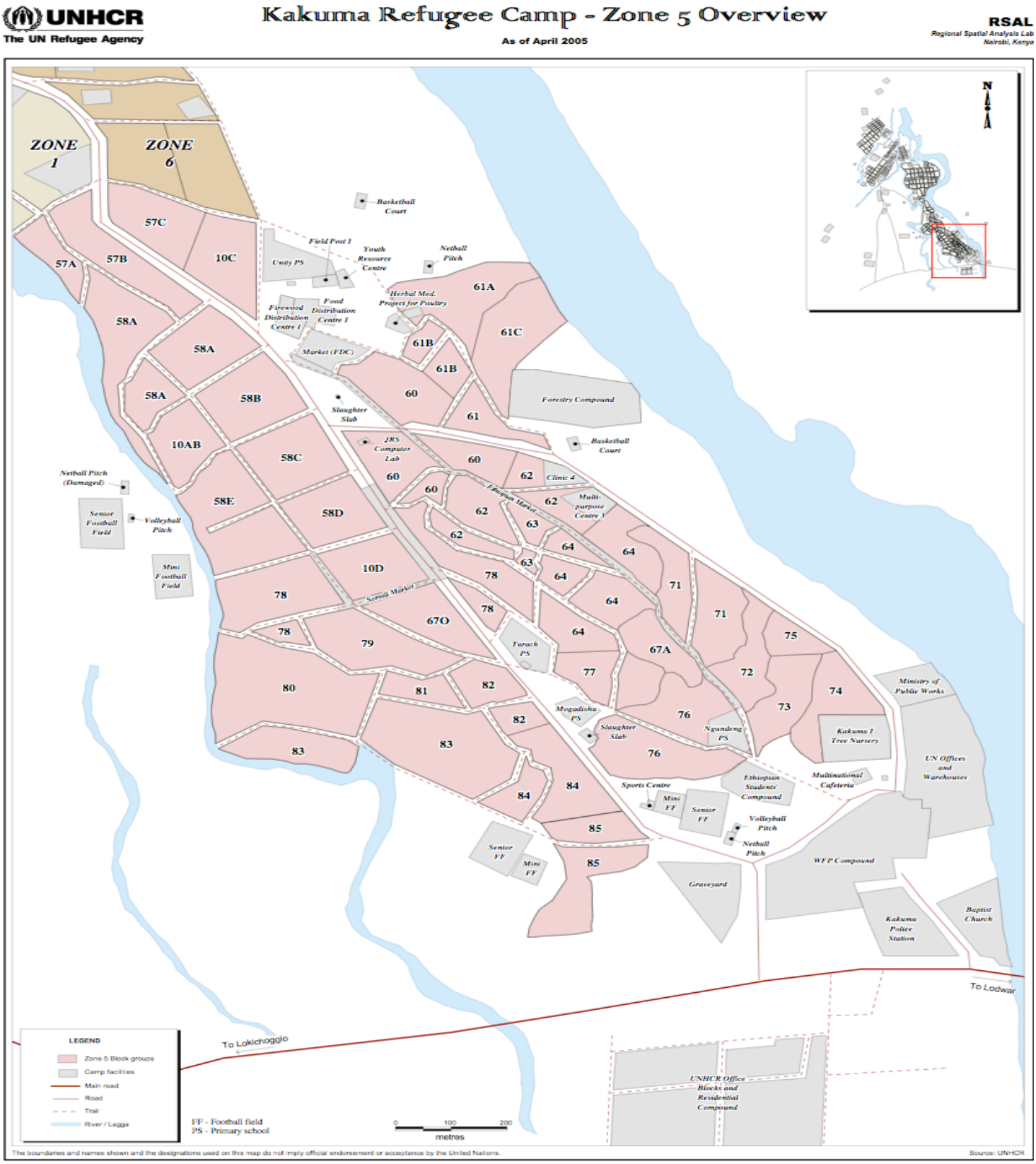
[133] Sudanese asylum seekers are granted refugee status in Kenya based on the *prima facie* principle enshrined in the Organisation of African Unity's 1969 Refugee Convention (Rutinwa 2002; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).

Kakuma II and III were inhabited predominately by Somalis, while Kakuma IV was occupied by mixed nationalities. As a result, despite the multi-national and multi-ethnic make-up of the camp population, different concepts of 'modernity' were being forged. Although previously identification with clan through the father's name was a sufficient source of local identity (see Hutchinson 1996), in the camp people started identifying themselves as 'African', 'Sudanese', 'Nuer', 'Dinka' and so on. Most respondents when asked about their origin replied "*I am an African, I am Sudanese, from South Sudan. But I am also Nuer, from Bentiu*." Hence, not only was the 'space' and 'place' of interaction and residence produced through the layout of the camp, so was the particular way of being 'modern' which was expressed in terms of being 'ethnic'.

However, interactions between different nationalities and ethnicities in the camp were present in daily life, including schools, hospital and clinics, markets, workshops and training sessions run by humanitarian organisations. Young people, especially those at school, were building inter-cultural friendships. For example, Nyakuoth, my research assistant, had strong friendships with Dinka boys and Ethiopian and Somali girls. There are also – despite disapproval from relatives – some marriages across national and ethnic boundaries.



Map 3. Kakuma Refugee Camp. UNHCR 2006



Map 4. Kakuma refugee camp: zone 5 – inhabited by the Nuer population. UNHCR 2006[134]

[134] Zones and groups correspond to areas inhabited by different nationalities and ethnic groups.

2.2. Structured 'modernity'

'Modernity' has been imposed on the Nuer, and other refugees, through the humanitarian governance structure. The 'modernising' effect of these policies is rarely mentioned in the literature on refugee camps. The Kenyan government is a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Since the arrival of 400,000 Somali refugees and thousands of Sudanese in 1991-2, daily management and assistance to refugees has been delegated to UNHCR (see Verdirame 1999; Hyndman 2000; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). UNHCR provides overall coordination and protection of refugees in Kakuma with assistance being provided through its partner organisations (see Annexe 1). The 'dislocated' form of modernity produced in Kakuma is partially a result of the type of refugee system put in place.

Although Kakuma is theoretically in Kenyan territory in practice the camp's legal regime is multifaceted (see Verdirame 1999; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). The Kenyan government is conspicuously absent from daily activities in the camp.[135] International (human rights) law operates at the level of UN and NGOs through refugee status determination, protection, assistance and resettlement policies. Kenyan laws regulate the criminal behaviour of refugees, including cases of rape and murder which are handled by Kenyan mobile courts.[136] Nation- and ethnic-specific administrative systems and customary laws are administered by refugees through their administrations and courts which handle common crimes and civil issues such as divorces, elopements and forced marriages. Laws have thus produced dislocated modernity. As a result, Kakuma is neither Kenya, nor Sudan, somewhere in-between, an extra-territorial space. This has had consequences for Kakuma as a particular place in (re)negotiation of social, and in particular gender, relations among the Nuer (see section three).

[135] The District Officer represents the Kenyan local administration in Kakuma. Kenyan police have a post just outside the camp. In the camp, each of the refugee nationalities and ethnic groups have their own administration, with local security groups, courts and committees dealing with water, food, health, education, repatriation and women's and girls issues.

[136] This was the first system of national mobile courts which adjudicated cases of refugees (interview with a UNHCR protection officer). The Kenyan magistrate court from Lodwar came once a month and the High Court from Kitale conducted sessions every two months in Kakuma.

The refugee regime in Kakuma, as in the typical refugee camp situation described by Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995), is mostly top-down, based on a specific division of labour and highly hierarchical structures of power between refugees, NGOs, UNHCR and the local population. Fences, wires, procedures and permits often separate these groups. [137] UNHCR, in charge of overall management and protection of refugees, has a superior position in relation to NGOs and refugees. There are tensions between UNHCR and NGOs whose employees often feel exploited and who told me of their resentment at having to "do the daily work" for which UNHCR then takes credit.

Relations between UNHCR and refugees are also contentious, partly due to the structure of interactions. The UN compound is located on the other side of the road from the refugee camp and protected by high fences, bright lights and armed guards. Early in the morning crowds of refugees gather in front of the UN gates, queuing for days in the sun to register their claims. Once allowed into the compound, they are put into fenced-off areas where they wait for hours for their interviews. Some UN and NGO employees use patronising language while referring to refugees: "*They are my refugees, I work for them, but sometimes they are like children. They only want to be assisted*," commented a UN employee. Such attitudes indicate and exacerbate the power dynamics between 'us' (aid workers) and 'them' (refugees).

Aid workers often complained about the mischievous behaviour of refugees, who make up stories of rape and abuse to qualify for resettlement, or register multiple times with different names to access larger rations. A UNHCR social services officer accused them of being liars: "*Look at them, when they go to meetings they come dressed very nicely and then they say they are suffering* [from] *poverty. Others come to say they were raped, but they don't even cry*."[138] During my stay UNHCR was preoccupied with 'detecting fraud' and conducting biometric verification of 'real refugees'. All refugees had to re-register, were finger-printed and issued new identity cards. A UN employee explained that this was in order to identify the 'recyclers', refugees who registered several times in order to gain higher rations. "*We are also trying to bring down the population of the camp. We need to know who is really in the camp; those who are*

[137] See discussion of human rights violations in the camp committed by international organisations and refugee administrations (Verdirame 1999; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).
[138] See Kibreab (2004), Harrell-Bond (2004) and Lammers (2006) on 'refugee cheating' as a survival strategy.

outside will be de-activated," commented the UNHCR protection officer. De-activation of 'recyclers' and 'bogus refugees' was a task that preoccupied most of her time. Due to time pressure, there was no consideration of the reasons for people's residence outside the camp: "*If they have gone outside the camp, that means they do not need our assistance. They will be de-activated*," argued the same officer. Meanwhile, numerous refugees complained that due to limited education and livelihood opportunities many people moved to the cities. However, they are still in need of protection and a refugee status in Kenya without which they are 'illegal'. "*The UNHCR is cheating us. They are supposed to protect us, but instead they see us as cheaters and they de-activate us*," complained a young Nuer man studying in Nairobi. "*This puts many people at risk*."

Although UNHCR and NGOs have set up numerous refugee committees meant to enable refugees to participate in programme design and implementation, their participation rarely goes beyond consultation or information sharing. I participated in several meetings of the Sudanese refugee repatriation advisory committee with the UNHCR and NGO representatives. Humanitarian workers mostly announced their plans and passed information to refugees, rather than hearing their input on the repatriation process. The refugee chair of the committee complained:

> Although they [the UN] call us to come to meetings, they do not give us chance to talk. And when we tell them how the repatriation process should go, they say that they have budgetary constraints and that the programme was already decided by Geneva and nothing can be changed now. They [the UN] do not see us [refugees] as equal; they call us volunteers and make us do their work to mobilise communities [to repatriate].

This demonstrates that despite UNHCR's commitment to a rights-based and participatory approach (UNHCR 2008d), the implementation of the policy continues to treat refugees as 'recipients' and 'beneficiaries' rather than as 'partners' with rights and entitlements (see Harrell-Bond 1986, 1994; Hyndman 2000; Kaiser 2004; De Vriese 2006; Grabska and Mehta 2008; Grabska 2008).

Refugee relations with NGOs are marked by power dynamics. Although the NGO compound is at the entrance to the camp, refugees need special permits or appointments to enter. Despite being located in a semi-desert with extreme water shortages the NGO compound has irrigated trees offering shade from the blazing sun, a swimming pool

(and a gym) for the use of humanitarian staff. At the time, refugees were entitled to daily ration of a mere two litres/day/person, taps often ran dry and refugees had to wait for hours to receive their entitlement. Those who could afford to do so bought water from the Turkana.

Tensions were also visible among refugees. Those who worked for NGOs and UNHCR often expressed their superiority to the rest of the camp population. Perceived as having access to powerful decision-makers, some refugees exploit their position. "*These refugees working for the LWF* [Lutheran World Federation] *are corrupt. When my husband abused me and I complained to the refugee worker, he told me that for the case to go to the UN I needed to give him kidikidoko* [a small bribe in KiSwahili]," complained a married woman. I repeatedly heard of incidents of refugee workers extorting money or sexual services from other refugees in order to gain access to the UN compound. Some women who wanted to access resettlement had to bribe LWF gender or child protection staff to register their claims.[139] UNHCR was also investigating several allegations of fraud and misconduct against refugee workers.

The camp's top-down structure – with UNHCR as coordinator and overseer and LWF in charge of camp management with local administration delegated to national and ethnic groups – exacerbated tensions between different ethnic groups. Nuer and other smaller groups felt that Dinka, and SPLA representatives in particular, dominated the Sudanese administration. A chairman of the Nuer community complained:

> The UN always gives more power to the Dinka to administer the Sudanese in the camp. They always try to dominate others, the same in Sudan. This is why in 1996 when clashes between the Nuer and the Dinka erupted in Kakuma, the UN had to separate us into different zones [residence] and create separate local administrative structures for each tribe.

Conflicts often result in fighting in Kakuma, mirroring ethnic tensions in southern Sudan (see chapter 5).

Refugees are not only managed by rules, fences, regulations and the intimidating presence of international organisations. Refugees are also fingerprinted, subjected to

[139] See Jansen (2008) on resettlement policies and negotiations of vulnerability and assertiveness among refugees in Kakuma.

regular 'headcounts' and unable to challenge restrictions of rights. According to Kenyan policy, refugees are not allowed to own land and carry out agricultural activities (Verdirame 1999). UNHCR and NGO incentive-based employment programmes offer only limited income-generating opportunities. Kenyan restrictions denying refugees the right to employment without a work permit mean that at the time of fieldwork some 1,200 worked on 'incentives' rather than salaries[140] (Verdirame 1999: 66). In addition, camp residents were denied other rights and freedoms – movement outside the camp and access to free education outside the camp (ibid). The encampment policy, described often as warehousing (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995; Smith, M. 2004; De Vriese 2006; USCRI 2008; Loescher et al. 2008), restriction of refugee rights and the language of power used by humanitarian workers resemble the organisation of labour camps, not spaces of protection for those denied it in their countries. The particular form of 'modernity' in the camp is characterised by lack of choice and democracy. The imposition of humanitarian management structures on refugees has combined with the refugee policies of the Kenyan government to create a system constraining rights, freedoms and choice. Refugee become objects to be 'managed', 'controlled' and 'silenced' without much possibility of 'opting out' of the system.

UNHCR and partner organisations provide a range of educational, training, health and income generating services. These services are much criticised by refugees for their inferior quality and neglect of agriculture and self-reliance. However, they are considered by refugees, humanitarian workers and policy-makers as major 'pull-factors' that continue to bring Sudanese across the border (Jamal 2000; Crisp 2002; Schechter 2004; Jansen 2008).[141] The International Rescue Committee (IRC) ran a hospital and four walk-in clinics with free services for refugees. In addition, the Catholic mission hospital in Kakuma town offered subsidised services to refugee and local populations. A number of Nuer refugees while making their decision to repatriate complained of the lack of infrastructure in their villages. "*Although life here in Kakuma is hard, at least you have school and hospital. But when we go back, we will not be able to educate our children. Sudan is still* [behind]*; there are no* [good] *hospitals and*

[140] Refugees often complain about being exploited and being paid much less than Kenyan colleagues for the same work, a mere $25-35 per month.
[141] This point was confirmed by Nuer and other southern Sudanese research participants and by LWF, IRC and UNHCR employees.

when you get sick, you cannot get help," commented Nyakuol, a widow of four children. For many refugees, especially Sudanese and Somalis, educational, health, training and income-generating services were of better quality than those available in their own war-torn societies. This was confirmed by the review of the camp's infrastructure carried out by Arafat Jamal of UNHCR's Evaluation, Policy and Analysis Unit, who states that "[…], broadly speaking, not only has minimum standards been attained, but in some cases, they were better than those prevailing in either the refugees' home countries or elsewhere in Kenya" (2000:5).

Raan, a young Nuer man, expressed the view of many young people: "*Education is the biggest incentive to stay here. Otherwise, this place is a prison. But we persevere, because we want to gain education, knowledge and be more 'civilised'.*" 'Modernity' is being forged through the Kenyan education system.[142] By 2006, there were seven pre-schools, 24 primary, four- secondary schools and a Training College for Teachers in Kakuma. In the 2006 academic year, there were over 21,000 enrolled primary pupils and 2,981 secondary students.[143] Access to education is highly gendered. While in the lower grades there is gender parity by fourth grade girls start dropping out due to domestic obligations, marriage and prejudice against female education prevalent in many of the refugee communities. Girls are a mere 11 percent of those attending secondary school.[144]

On morning strolls through the Nuer zone, I rarely saw anyone in the dusty alleys. Children and youths were in school, younger men in training courses or at work and women and older men were busy with community activities, collecting food rations, queuing for water, exchanging food items in the market, cooking, or checking on arrival of financial transfers from relatives abroad. Clearly the management and infrastructure of Kakuma refugee camp was not only designed to deliver aid efficiently, but also to keep refugees in check, busy with their daily activities while waiting, often in limbo for decades, for a permanent solution to their precarious condition.

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[142] Education in Kakuma is based on the Kenyan curriculum and provided in English free of charge up to secondary level. Access to universities is enabled through distant learning programmes run through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK). The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provides scholarships to refugees through long distance learning provided by the University of South Africa (UNISA). For the role of education in refugee situations, see Sommers (2001).

[143] LWF and UNHCR education statistics (2006).

[144] ibid.

The proliferation of rules and laws imposed by international institutions and the Kenyan government marked a change in the 'traditional' governing structures for the predominantly agro-pastoralist Nuer and other ethnic groups. In the name of efficiency aid provision structures are designed to control and silence refugee populations (see Hyndman 1998, 2000; Walkup 1997; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995; Smith M. 2004). Through the particular 'modernity' created by global UN humanitarianism, refugees in Kakuma have been subjected to international processes, personnel and, as it will be shown in sextion 2.4., discourses on human rights norms and standards. Encampment policies with restrictions on freedom to movement, right to work and other civil rights have combined with highly hierarchical humanitarian assistance to dramatically change people's lives and relations.

2.3. Other 'modernity' encounters in daily life in Kakuma

In addition to being a site of 'UN-sponsored modernity', there were other encounters in Kakuma of *nei ti cike ker* [people who have awoken] – the market, church, global communications and infrastructure. Markets offer imported goods from across the continent as well as communication and technology (TV, mobile phones, satellite dishes) which make arid Kakuma into a booming, multi-cultural, vibrant environment, not an isolated rural settlement. The presence of refugees and the international humanitarian agencies in charge of the 'management' of the camp triggered an influx of business, job and trading opportunities attracting Kenyans from other parts of the district and the country (de Montclos and Kagwanja 2000). As de Montclos and Kagwanja rightly point out, Kakuma emerged as "an urban enclave in a sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped part of Kenya" (2000: 206). From a village settlement in 1990 of 5,000 inhabitants, Kakuma within a decade had become a town (outside the camp's perimeter) of 40,000 (Jamal 2000). As a site of intense of international attention, Kakuma's 'cosmopolitanism' was thriving. Planes, buses, and four-wheel drives vehicles regularly disgorge foreign dignitaries, donors, ambassadors, international humanitarian staff, journalists, missionaries, researchers and activists. The Internet, websites[145] and research publications connect Kakuma to the world.

[145] See for example: http://kakuma.wordpress.com/

Kakuma is classified as "care-and-maintenance" camp with the population relying on humanitarian assistance provided by UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), the government and other partners (UNHCR COP 2007). It includes water, food, and firewood distributions. The Kenyan government has sited refugee camps in semi-arid areas unsuited for cultivation, which constrained refugees' ability to produce own food. This has combined with work restrictions to limit prospects of refugees' self-sufficiency (De Montclos and Kagwanja 2000; Verdirame 1999), making them reliant on humanitarian handouts and, similarly to other camps, creating a dependency which undermines their social identity further marginalises them (Kibreab 1993; Horst 2006). For the agro-pastoralist Nuer and Dinka, this policy also meant a change in their livelihoods, means of exchange and social identities. The predominantly cattle-keeping populations have had to turn to paid employment. "*In Kakuma, the cows were not around and we had no cows to talk about. I knew only that in the Nuer tradition we marry with cows, and use cows for sacrifices. Money was what we talked about*," explained Kuok introduced in chapter 1 and 5 and my research assistant in Sudan. Through limited income-generating opportunities available in the camp either as 'incentive workers' in usually menial jobs with NGOs or as traders, restaurants owners or service providers[146] cattle-keeping Nuer have become reliant on money.

As with changes wrought in Nuerland by arrival of missionaries in the early 20th century (Hutchinson 1996), the significant presence of missionaries in Kakuma brought ideas of 'new civilised and modern life'. In the Nuer zone alone, there were 11 different churches providing ecumenical educational and support services. Refugee houses are decorated with symbols and pictures of Christ. Youth and women particularly constantly refer to God and the Bible, emphasising that through the church they have found a 'new light'. "*This is a real God, not like these small gods of our ancestors. We are now more civilised* [through Christianity]," commented one young Nuer man, a former soldier. Lony, a 'lost boy', first encountered God and church in the training camps in Ethiopia:

[146] Ethiopian and Somali refugees run most businesses. They trade goods brought from across the continent, run Internet cafes, restaurants and computer training centres and provide hairdressing, tailoring, mini-bus and money transfer services. At the time of fieldwork the Sudanese market was dormant, with only a few stalls offering basic vegetables and grains. De Montclos and Kagwanja note how the predominantly agro-pastoralist Sudanese are unfamiliar with trade (2000: 78), an observation confirmed by my Sudanese respondents.

> But then, I was too small to understand. Only when I came to Kakuma, and later in 1994 when I was baptised and was nominated to be an assistant catechist, I discovered a new life. I became different, civilised somehow and educated. I became a modern person who believed in big God, not in small gods.

Most young people as well as older women in Kakuma have been baptised. Nuer men referred to the church as being "for women and children". Some older men were baptised in Sudan and through their connections to church gained access to the camp, for example to participate in Bible schools in Kenya. The majority did not join the church. "*We are old and we have our gods. We let the women go to duel kuoth* [church] *and we will follow them later*", commented Tot. Conversions were an important gendered marker of difference between the younger and older generations.

The connection to the 'other world' was no longer a distant possibility as many relatives and friends migrated to neighbouring countries or joined programmes and resettled in the west.[147] The daily flow of remittances to the camp and visits of resettled 'lost boys' in search of wives have become integral to a wider transnational and diasporic network of families and communities (see Grabska 2010). Being in the camp offers opportunities for diasporic connections via phone, email and radio[148] and television exposure to western, mostly American, consumerism. Some Nuer 'lost boys' often mentioned that they "have friends everywhere", and that "the world is like a global village now" connected through email and Internet.

'Worldliness' was also expressed through the informal naming of different sections of the camp after major world events. For example, the two areas known for production of alcohol and presence of video and computer game stalls were called Baghdad and Hong Kong. "*We call it Baghdad because when you go there, you drink so much, and then everybody fights, it is like total collapse. Like the war* [and Saddam Hussain's collapse] *in Baghdad*," explained a Nuer young man. A connection between the 'local refugee' and the 'global modern world' was being forged.

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[147] See Jansen 2008 on resettlement programs in Kakuma.

[148] For the role of remittances and modern technology in maintaining transnationally nomadic lifestyles, see Horst's (2006) analysis of Somali refugees in Dadaab camp.

2.4. Gender-mainstreaming and workshops

The encounter of 'localised refugees' with the global UN humanitarianism produced a gendered form of 'modernity' because of the high level of attachment to gender equality in UN's assistance and protection programming. Implemented by UNHCR and its partners, the policy used rights- and community-based approaches and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM), aiming to "enhance the protection of women and girls who are displaced, returnee, (re)integrate and stateless and to ensure that they are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with men and boys" (UNHCR 2008c: 21). The policy was partially a result of numerous studies focusing on the vulnerability of refugee women to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and the statistics of refugee populations expressed in terms of "the majority being women and children" (Martin 2004).

From the 1970s, there has been an attempt by UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations to recognise the special needs of refugee women. Initially concerned with protection concerns due to insecurity in the camps, including rapes and sexual exploitation the policy evolved into a transformative endeavour.[149] The most recent version of the UNHCR Handbook for Protection of Women and Girls states:

> UNHCR has the responsibility to promote gender equality and work towards the elimination of violence against women and girls of concern as integral parts of our protection mandate. (UNHCR 2008c: 23).

The outcome of the policy is supposed to lead to greater gender equality of the sexes while raising the status of women through their 'empowerment'.

Kakuma was one of the first camps where gender programming was implemented. However, as the head of UNHCR in Kakuma commented to me in 2006, "*ten years after the start of the programme, the women are still suffering and there is little gender equality in the camp*."[150] AGDM was implemented through a multi-dimensional programme of awareness-raising, empowerment, assistance and protection. Awareness-raising and training on human rights and gender issues are mainly implemented

[149] For the evolution of the UNHCR's protection of women and girls and the development of AGDM policy see Kumin 2008; Women's Commission 2002; UNHCR 1991, 2001, 2003.
[150] Interview with the head of the UNHCR-sub office in Kakuma, May 2006.

through billboards, campaigns and workshops. Talking a walk through the camp, one could not help noticing billboards warning against domestic violence, rape and discrimination against women: "Women are Good Decision-Makers", "Women's Rights are Human Rights", "Real Men Educate Their Women".

The importance of forging global ideas of citizenship, human rights and gender equality through workshops became apparent on my first day in Kakuma. While looking for Sudanese planning to repatriate, I was pointed in the direction of 'workshops' organised for potential returnees. Some 30 young people (among them eight girls) were participating in a human rights and gender training course for Nuer returnees organised by the LWF repatriation unit. A tall, well-dressed 16-year old, Nyamai, was chosen to translate for those who did not speak English. She was outspoken and not afraid to speak out in front of men. She was among the few Nuer girls attending secondary school and represented a new generation girl, '*nyial ti ngac ke ngoan'*, 'an educated and knowledgeable girl'. Paul, in his twenties, explained: "*These workshops are good; they teach us how to be 'modern'*, '*nei ti cike ker*' [people who have awoken]. *We have now understood that women and men are equal. Our generation is 'pro-women'*."

I participated in many workshops during my stay in Kakuma – as UNHCR and NGOs wanted to prepare and 'educate' Sudanese for their return to Sudan. "*Through these workshops, we can educate them [refugees] and make them a bit more civilised, modern. They will be ready to go back to their countries and re-build them*," explained the head of LWF training services. These observations of the 'civilising' mission of the workshops were also confirmed by the UNHCR social services officer. There were umpteen workshops on water, sanitation, the CPA, civil and citizenship rights, human rights, gender and peace-building. They struck me as part of an 'accelerated modernity project' of creating a 'gendered Sudanese citizen'. Most refugees were constantly attending workshops designed not only to teach about women's rights, but also to "sensitize them [boys and men] and create space for women's and girls' empowerment" (UNHCR 2008c: 25). Women were expected to participate in the workshops but although some girls and women came, their participation was limited due to lack of fluency in English. Research participants often proudly showed their certificates of attendance and used 'gender-correct' language to impress me with their

new status of *nei ti cike ker* [people who have awoken]. Special assistance programmes targeting girls and women were provided to "support their empowerment in the economic and public decision-making domain, by training in mobilisation, leadership and organizational skills, women's and girls' rights, by capacity building for entrepreneurship, and by micro-credit support" (UNHCR 2008c: 28). Every woman and girl whom I interviewed in Kakuma attended at least one of the numerous courses offered, mainly in tailoring, cooking, sewing, knitting and nursing. Some schoolgirls managed to get beyond the essentialised female and domesticated courses, and learned how to use computers or repair electrical appliances. As a key activity to facilitate women's empowerment, UNHCR and NGOs were strengthening women's community-based organisations and promoting women's leadership.

The main element of AGDM (and becoming *raan ca ker* – an awoken person) was the provision of education for girls under the slogan: "If you educate a boy, you educate an individual; if you educate a girl, you educate a nation." Girls received scholarships and assistance, including school uniforms and supplies provided by UNHCR and NGOs. JRS supported 'girls at risk' of domestic abuse or forced marriage with scholarships to attend Kenyan boarding schools. LWF, charged with overseeing education in the camp, nevertheless, reported problems with girls' attendance. In order to address high rates of early dropouts due to the burden of domestic duties, early marriages and pregnancies, UNHCR and LWF built a dedicated girls boarding school, an initiative supported by UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie and named after her. It was finally opened in 2005, however, only four classes were operational by the time of my fieldwork. To gain entry to the school, girls had to take exams and justify their 'vulnerable' position in the community. Some places were reserved for 'victims of gender violence', mainly girls who were at risk of rape, domestic exploitation or abduction for marriage.

The main focus of UNHCR's gendered protection was combating the sexual and gender based violence against women and girls[151] common in refugee settings (Hyndman 1998; Abdi 2006a; Bartolomei and Pittaway 2003; Kangwaja 2000; Schechter 2004). Apart from gender-dedicated NGO and UNHCR units monitoring the

[151] See UNHCR Kakuma COP 2007.

security in the camp, there were also designated protection areas for violated or at-risk women. They included *Safe Havens* and *Protection Areas* run by JRS and UNHCR. In case of greater danger to women and girls' security, UNHCR either transferred them to another camp or recommended them for resettlement. A UNHCR social services officer explained to me the rationale of AGDM:

> Men are the perpetrators of gender violence here. We want them to respect women's rights, and girls and women have to be empowered. They have to know that they are equal to men, and have the same rights. If we educated them and give them income-generating possibilities, they will be empowered.

Hence, the goal of these policies was to alter gender relations through achieving gender equality, creating new (gender) identities, and eliminating gender-based violence, discrimination and injustice. This particular 'gendered modernity' had direct consequences on negotiation and practice of gender identities in the camp.

3. *NEI TI CIKE KER* [PEOPLE WHO HAVE AWOKEN]: GENDERED AND GENERATIONAL IDENTITIES

The camp, as a gendered place (Hyndman 1998, 2000; de Alwis 2004), was a site of renegotiation of gender relations, including identities and ideologies. But to what extent were they reversing the previous gender imbalances? Were they in fact emancipating women while correcting some of the male biases embedded in the patriarchal ideologies of southern Sudanese and the Nuer in particular? Before I attempt to answer these questions, I discuss the demographic gendering of the camp.

The transformations in gender relations were influenced by age and gender imbalances. Of 92,000 refugees in Kakuma, some 59 percent of the refugee population were men with 41 percent women. Approximately 50 percent of the population was under the age of 18 (UNHCR COP 2007).[152] Of the Sudanese population in the camp, 60 percent were men, those under eighteen were 49 percent of the total population and 31 percent were between 18 and 30 years old.[153] Only one in five Sudanese camp residents was older than 30. A significant part of the youth were 'unaccompanied minors' almost

[152] No detailed gender/age breakdown statistics are available.
[153] See chapter 5 for the explanation of gender mobility and access to the camp.

entirely male, representing the initial group of 'lost boys' who arrived in Kenya in 1992 (see chapter 5). One in four Sudanese refugees between the ages of five and eighteen were was female, while among the Nuer there were three times more young men than young women (UNHCR Kakuma 2007).

The length of displacement and the point in person's life cycle when displacement took place were important determinants of gendered experiences in Kakuma. Those who had spent their childhood and youth in refugee camps either in Ethiopia or in Kenya grew up differently from those who had recently arrived from Sudan and spent their formative years in conflict zones. The former have been exposed to education, gender equality and human rights programming and grew up in a multi-cultural environment. The latter brought with them already formed identities and due to their lack of English their exposure to the education in Kakuma was more limited.[154] Although there are no specific statistics on the age/gender/length composition of the population, life stories and in-depth qualitative interviews that I collected in Kakuma and Sudan revealed that older men and many young men who arrived as 'lost boys' in the camp in 1991-2 left for Sudan between 1997-2006, with some 3,500 'lost boys' resettled to the USA. By 2006, the majority of young men over the age of 18 had arrived since early 2000. By contrast, the majority of female and male youth younger than 18 and most women have been in the camp since the mid-1990s. This gendered and generational composition of the camp was significant for the changes in gender relations.

3.1. 'Modern educated pro-women men' versus '*kuong-yong* and domino' men

Hutchinson (1996) notes the emergence of 'bull-boys' (unscarified young men) as a result of the spread of education and Christianity in eastern Nuerland in the 1980s. In the narratives of the western Nuer 'lost boys' in Kakuma, their first exposure to 'modernity' was in the Ethiopian training camps of the SPLA through education and Christianisation (see chapter 5). In their life stories presented in chapter 5, Jial, Kuok, and Wanten all talked about their first encounters with school and church. For them, the experiences in Kakuma were a continuation of this transformation, marking a new route to adulthood and manhood. Thus, the (re)negotiation and forging of 'new' gender

[154] Educational, training and community activities were in English, including communication with UNHCR and NGOs.

identities and relations was part of the ongoing process of change instigated by forced displacement.

A 'lost boy' in his twenties explained how war-induced displacement was advantageous:

> Without this displacement there would not be Kakuma and we would not have the chance to come here and gain education. Now, Kakuma has changed us, it has changed our Nuer culture. *Entedi, kon dholi ti ngac ke ngoani* [young men/boys who are knowledgeable, educated and have deeper insights into the way the world works]. We know about women's rights and that girls and boys are equal. We are different.

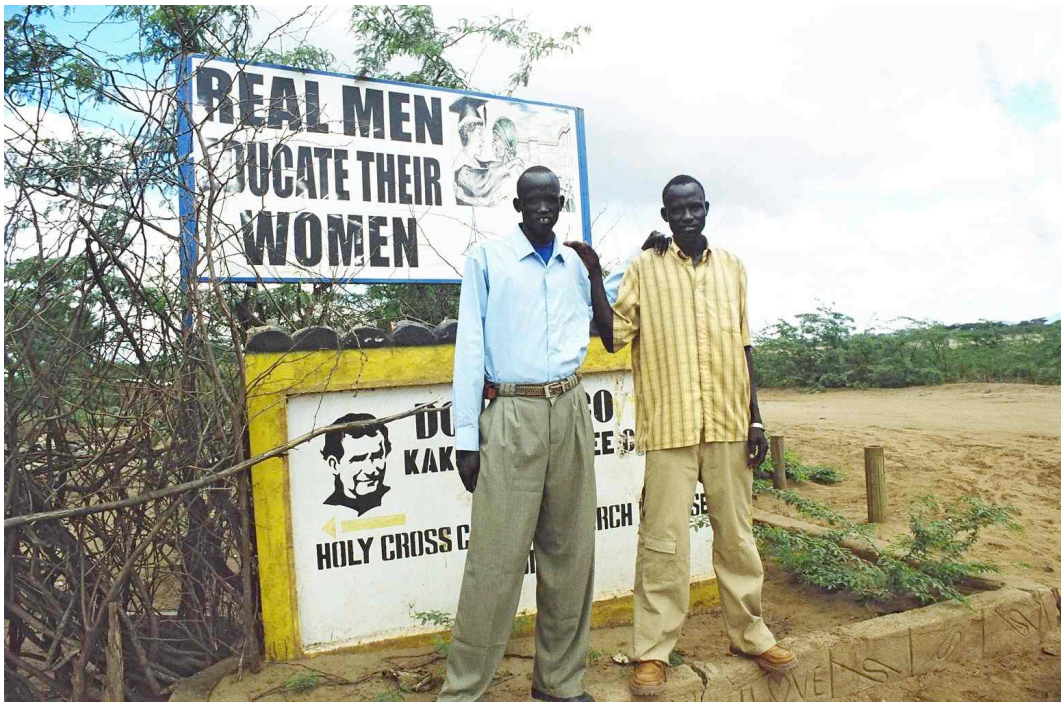

Figure 9: 'New' young men, Kakuma, 2006

Young men often described Kakuma as a chance in accessing a different status – of *dholi ti ngac ke ngoani* (boys having deeper understanding of the world). *Ti ngac ke ngoani* was associated with education (the power of the pen), knowledge of the world beyond the village and awareness of gender equality issues. Young boys, girls, women and men, especially those who spent most of their lives in refugee camps in Ethiopia or Kenya praised Kakuma as a 'chance' that opened up their minds and created new opportunities. There was a general concern about the place of the Nuer in the wider world. "*The world of 2006, of today, has changed. We, Nuer, have to do other things now*," asserted Majang referring to the need of education and vocational profession.

The youth recognised the new circumstances of their world and saw themselves not only as part of their village, but also as part of Sudan, Africa and the world (see chapter 5).

Both older and younger people's narratives about "the way things changed in Kakuma" were filled with references to the past. Women and men referred often to "the old days of *cieng nuära* (Nuer culture/village)" as signifying stability and order and 'proper' Nuer masculinity. They noted that the 'old values' still defined the 'real Nuer man' (*wur nuära*) – the ability to talk in public, make decisions and distinguish between good and evil. The way to attain them was, however, different. In their comments on the changing routes to manhood, the elderly talked with nostalgia of the no longer valued rituals (see chapter 4). Tot, an elder from Akobo, commented that "*to be a mature man now is to go to school, to be able to talk well and to have experience in town. It is also a question of age*." Initiation through *gaar*, already contested during the second civil war (see chapter 5), was being replaced by other signs of manhood and maturity in Kakuma. Power of the pen replaced the wartime power of the gun, and together with baptism eliminated *gaar*. While conversing with a group of young men about the process of manhood in Kakuma, one commented: "*I refused to be initiated. Now peace is coming and there is no more initiation by marking*." Thok, my research assistant, explained that this "*means he is now civilising. He has changed from the tradition to the world of today. Cultured modern people do not have marks*." While 'tradition' was associated in narratives of young and old with *gaar*, the 'world of today', 'the modern world' signified new routes to manhood. However, as Tot's friends, also elders, stressed: "*Nuer men are now modernised through education and church, but they still need to respect cieng nuära, Nuer culture. We, the elders, are still the guardians of the culture*." It was through the reference to 'our culture' that the elders attempted to maintain their moral authority and seniority over the youth, often faltering and challenged as a result of life in Kakuma (see section 3).

Young men also related changes in the concept of age-sets which are no longer based on group scarification. Wanten, a 'lost boy' separated from his family, explained how:

> When we arrived in Kakuma, this is when we were put in houses with other boys. They were not from our community and we learned how to share lives with those from other tribes [ethnic groups]. We divided domestic tasks among ourselves, such as cooking, fetching water and collecting.

Being housemates or classmates marked a new *ric* (age-set) concept. A common narrative of 'becoming lost boys' was part of the journey to manhood through a shared group experience. Kuok, whose life I followed in Kakuma and Nuerland, explained that:

> When I was recruited in Ler by SPLA, there were many young boys in my group. We did not know each other. But throughout the journey on foot and by barges to Ethiopia, there was a lot of danger, fighting, killing, children were dying of starvation. We had to learn how to help each other. In our group, we were five. Matok was the one who saved us when we were crossing the river to Ethiopia. We did not know how to swim and he grabbed a piece of tree and this is how we survived. Later, in Kakuma, we lived together, and assisted each other. Now, some of us are in America, one is in Nairobi and some went back to Sudan.
>
> At the beginning we were very disturbing [trouble-makers] as children and as students. We did not obey teachers' authority because we were used to the authority of the gun. But then, through church, school, sports and social clubs we began to live a different life.

'New' men boasted of their abilities to solves conflicts and bring peace through dialogue and 'talk', negating the old rules of Nuer warrior man ready to solve conflicts through fighting.[155]

In the narratives of the old and young, access to education became a new route to adulthood and a characteristic of a 'real Nuer man' (*wur nuära*). In the past, parents were reluctant to send their sons to predominantly missionary-provided education since it meant "giving your son away to white people." The least favoured son was sent to missionary schools. The elders told me that they feared that the child would come back "different from the rest of us in the village." "*The educated men were called then turuk* [foreigners*]. They knew the life of rek* [town], *not the life of cieng* [village]", explained Tot in his sixties. *Turuks'* access to government jobs and collaboration with *kume* (government) brought a rift in the *cieng* (community) structures. As Hutchinson (1996) shows, elders felt threatened by these 'new fashioned *dholi'* (boys). The attitude to education started changing after the first civil war with education becoming desirable during the second war. Similarly to changes in manhood among the Maasai in Tanzania studied by Hodgson (2001b, 2004), parents realised potential benefits of education as their children had access to government income and position in the community thus enhancing their own well-being. In the case of Maasai, *ormeek* in the colonial era was a

[155] See similar transformation of 'warrior' masculinities of the Masaai (Hodgson 2004).

term used by elders to describe a 'modern' Maasai man who was educated, baptised and worked in government structures. It was only with the changing socio-economic conditions in Tanzania that the Masaai started regarding access to education as a form of gaining respect, position and access to wealth (Hodgson 2001b: 131). In Kakuma, educated 'boy' became a superior masculinity, and as discussed in chapter 5, parents sent their sons to the camp specifically to access education.

'New Nuer men' had also mastered 'gender-talk'. Wanten told me that "*we are like you now* ['western']". *We recognise that women and men are equal and that women have rights. Women are behind our successes*." Acknowledging the new position of women, their rights and contributions to the community was part of discourse of men perceiving themselves as 'western' and 'modern'. They also claimed that they only want to have one wife and a few children "*because as a responsible man you have to do family planning. You have to be able to afford to feed your family and educate all your children*." Others stressed: "*God only allows you to marry one wife. Also, economically, this makes more sense*." Hence, due to gender sensitisation, reproductive health and family planning workshops and the spread of Christian doctrine among the youth in the camp, young men were adopting 'modern' concepts of family.

Whether this new 'gendered' language was a new lived and practiced masculine identity – rather than an image adopted for the benefit of western foreigners, including myself – was not always clear. For example, almost all the young men I talked to in Kakuma claimed that they would marry only one wife, an educated woman over the age of 18. However, many of those whom I met later in Nuerland had married young un-educated girls and kept them at home despite claiming to send their wives to school (see chapter 8). Also, by the time I was leaving Ler, several were looking for a second wife. These young men skilfully deployed one image for westerners, closer to that of a western model of a 'respectable man' in order to gain respect, minimise their marginalisation as refugees and access benefits such as education sponsorships. I also found it easier to associate with young men who held views closer to my feminist stance rather than those who mistreated and disrespected girls and women. While the rhetoric remained 'western and modern', in daily life the young men continued some of their previous 'masculine threats'.

At the same time, young men often referred to Kakuma as a space where they were able to gain relative freedom from the community rules and expectations of 'respectable good Nuer behaviour'. "*Here we are able to do things that are not considered man's job, like cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, bringing firewood and food rations. Our mothers and sisters are not with us, so we have to do the domestic work*," commented Thok, my research assistant. Once they went back to Sudan, they were under community pressure to conform to local masculinity ideals (see chapter 8). The 'new modern masculinity' was not only strategically chosen but also limited.

'New' Nuer masculinity was also strongly intertwined with development and reconstruction of southern Sudan. Thok explained that:

> "We have to get educated in Kakuma in order to go back and rebuild our country and community." His friend, a former soldier and now a secondary school student in Kakuma commented: "Now, when we go back, we already know that this is our land [Sudan] and that we have to work for it.[…] To be a man is to help your country.

To be a man was no longer restricted to being a Nuer man. Rather, the source of identity was the greater nation, Sudan, or southern Sudan. This was partly a result of nationalist sloganising and the experience of the liberation struggle (chapter 5). Dignitaries from southern Sudan who came to encourage repatriation referred to young men as "agents of change", "future leaders of Sudan" (chapter 7). To be educated was not only to assist oneself and his family and community. It was rather an obligation to "do something for the country" and a collective 'mission' to bring peace and development to their communities. In the words of a young man, "*if you are educated, you have to drop the gun now. This is a war of development and you have a duty as a man to do something for your country*." Thus, experience of modernity, intertwined with the shifting concepts of masculinity, for the Nuer youth was not a moment (being in the camp), but rather – as with the Zambians studied by Ferguson (1999) and with Manjacos in Guinea Bissau researched by Gable (2006) – a meaning, a way of imaging the world and being able to collectively contribute to its change.

While some of the hyper-masculine youth were turning into *dholi ti ngac ke ngoani* (educated boys with deeper insights into life), others suffered emasculation. Married

men and elders who came to the camp as adults often complained about their inability to provide for their families due to the conditions in Kakuma. Garjul, a father of four in his mid-thirties, succinctly described the new dependency:

> In our Nuer tradition, a Nuer man cannot be assisted [given a cow] twice. If you are given assistance all the time, you are seen as a weak man, and lose respect. UN is our father here. It provides us with food, shelter, and water and protects us. It has made us, *wutni nuäri* [Nuer men], into *gaat* [children]. It is not possible to be a *kuäär kä diet* [leader and elder] in Kakuma, even if you were a soldier.

This metaphor of the dependency on the UN as a provider for the household was seen as not masculine and reflected the weakened position of men. Robbed of the title of *guar* (father) in the household, some men felt that the material basis of their superior position with respect to their wives and children was undermined. By describing the new conditions in exile as *enteme kon gaat,*[156] older men pointed to their perceived emasculation and disempowerment. They expressed their bitterness and helplessness:

> There are no jobs, no way to perform our traditional roles. We lose respect at home and in the community. Look, our wives run now to UNHCR since this is their new husband. The UN gives them food, shelter and when they say that we beat them, the UN takes our wives and children away from us and sends them to migration [resettlement]. *Dholi kuääri entäme* [boys are leaders now].

Men felt challenged in their positions not only because of the UN as a 'new father (*guar*)' but also by the growing power of 'young educated men' and women. As with new young leaders among Burundian refugees in Tanzania studied by Simon Turner (1999, 2000, 2001), in Kakuma most leadership functions in local courts, refugee administration and international agencies are taken by young men. I was surprised to learn that the Nuer court had 12 members, including three women, who were all under 30 years old, some of them single. In Nuerland, only senior elder men, in their late forties or fifties, married with children, who have gained the status of 'respectable men' are elected court members. The Nuer community chairman complained that: "*to be a kuäär* [chief] *now you have to be able to speak English and know how to write so you can communicate with the UN. Only the young who went to school qualify. Since we have women's rights now, the UN insists that we include women. Now, women and youth* [male] *run the community affairs*." According to UNHCR gender programming,

[156] The literal translation is 'we are now children'.

women were supposed to be included in all community leadership structures and their participation was required in official meetings.[157] The international organisations preferred to deal with those who were literate and able to communicate in English. This eliminated almost all elders and senior men. Hence, the creation of new and shifting of old dimensions of power challenged the material basis of men's superiority, making older men insecure in their (gender) positions.

Figure 10: Nuer court elders in Kakuma.

Men's narratives reflected also their concerns about losing control over their children and women. Tot, an elder married to two wives lacked qualifications and was unable to provide for both families. His idleness bothered his wives because they had to struggle to find food for the children. Tot lamented:

> My older wife told me that I was useless, that I was staying home and doing nothing while she had to take a job as a cleaner in the hospital to support the family. She finally quarrelled with me and ran to protection [the UNHCR]. She told the UN that I was beating her. They took her and the children away from me. Now, they might even go for resettlement. I feel I have no control [over them] because of women's rights.

Some men felt that human rights rhetoric was employed in the camp to chastise men. "*In the camp, women are practicing their human rights. When you are unable to*

[157] See AGDM guidelines in UNHCR Kakuma COP 2007; also Nuer constitution in Kakuma.

provide for them, they go to other men and have many husbands," explained Majang, a male Nuer counsellor working for JRS:

> In Sudan, it was forbidden for the lady to go to another man. Here they go with other men and if the husband talks strong to the wife she goes to UNHCR for protection and says: "*now he will experience the meaning of human rights*." Also, here people interact with other cultures, they see how other nationalities are living and practicing [their gender relations] and the women think they are free to do it.

The lack of control over women's sexuality concerned many men. They located it in their inability to provide for their wives, and partially as a result of women rights. I often heard men complaining about women's control over food rations. "*Before we could control the woman through the access to food, but now, since she can go to the UN directly, the woman has more power in the family and you might feel that you are not a man,*" commented Majang. Due to women holding their own ration cards and not having to rely on men for food, the source of men's control over the household was undermined. The ration card eroded much of the material basis of women's subordination.

Bol, an Anglican church elder, talked about the social pressure of carrying out masculine responsibilities and the inability to do so in the camp.

> Since women can go away now because of the UN, the other people will see you as a weak man. The man worries that if other people see the family not taken care of with dirty clothes, malnourished children, with nothing to eat – this will be perceived as a problem for the man. The man might fear that the community will insult him and will see him as unable to provide for the family. He will not be respected in the community. This pressure comes from all the people, women and men. This pressure can be very big for men, because the man is seen as the responsible person who should provide for his family and ensure its well-being. For the man it is very shameful if he cannot provide for the family.

Hence, maintaining masculinity was also linked to the opinion of others. Men also felt that international law was undermining their rights over children. Bol fondly reminisced about a past when paternal rights were stable: "*In our culture, once you married a woman with cows, the children and the woman belong to you. But here, when there is a quarrel in the family, the woman runs for protection* [to the UN] *and the UN takes the children away from you*." Feeling helpless, men often reacted to loss of status through alcohol, gambling or use of domestic violence.

Women vocally expressed disapproval and disappointment with the 'new emasculated men'. A Nuer mother lambasted them:

> Look at them, they are useless, our men. They are no longer men. Men in Sudan are strong, they have muscular bodies and they bring you food and protect you. Here, these men are skinny; they sit around playing cards and dominoes and do nothing, and waste our food on *nyalonglong* [local alcohol]. We call them *kuong-yong* [drunkards] and domino men.

There are similar experiences of refugee men having their masculine position of protectors, providers and household decision-makers undermined, either in camps (Turner 2000, 2001; Brun 2000), urban setting (Jaji 2009; Rowe 2006; Lejukole 2000) or in resettlement countries (McSpadden 1999). Some men in Kakuma strongly felt that the camp conditions and the 'gender programming' challenged their 'masculinity'. As Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1996: 12) observed, "masculinity appears as an essence or commodity, which can be measured, possessed, or lost." In Kakuma, militarised (hyper-masculinities) and emasculated masculinities were being re-shaped and transformed to 'educated civilised Christian future leaders of Sudan'. Meanwhile, some elder men, who did not actively participate in the 'modernising programmes', suffered further emasculation and loss of status and seniority. The felt emasculation of men revealed the material basis of the men's power and authority over women. Both the presence of the UN and men's weakened economic contribution to the household, as identified by Majang and Bol, undermined men's power and control. The newly gained position and bargaining power of women in Kakuma was perceived as a threat to the Nuer men's prestige and status.

3.2. Educated empowered girls and women versus women at risk

While masculinities were 'modernised' so were Nuer wartime femininities. Nyamai, a 16-year old translator of the first workshops I attended in Kakuma (see above), was among the few Nuer schoolgirls. She had left Nuerland in 1997 together with her mother and siblings, when the bombings of the area intensified. Her father, who was among the 'teachers' escorting 'lost-boys' from Ethiopia to Kakuma, arrived in the camp in 1991. Through his connections with the SPLA he arranged for his family to join him. As an educated man, he sent all his six children to school. He has been working with UNICEF in Sudan since 2001 and could afford better education for his children. Some of them were in Nairobi and Nyamai was in a Kenyan boarding secondary school. Nyamai was the girl youth leader in the camp. She participated in drama clubs, played volleyball with boys, was in the Catholic church and represented girls at workshops and public events. Ambitious, outspoken and not afraid to speak out in front of men, she was one of the 'new generation' girls in Kakuma:

> The difference between girls in Kakuma and in Sudan is that girls here are allowed to go to school and they are educated. But there, girls are not allowed, because the family only looks into the wealth that they will get from marrying the girl. There, when the girl grows up, they immediately find her husband. Here, the girls are given a right to choose. They are allowed to play sports, move freely, are allowed to attend choir competitions and church events. Here, parents realised that it is good for girls to do these things. But in Sudan, from what I hear, if you interact with boys, you are seen as a prostitute. Here, the NGOs are making this change. They are encouraging girls to participate and become leaders. Also it depends on the parents. Those parents who have been here long time, they see the benefit of education and exposure for girls. So they let us do these things. But those men who came from Sudan recently, they do not accept human rights and they think that they can make women and girls work for them here. But they realise that we are different and they go back to Sudan.

As Nyamai's account illustrates, education, awareness-raising, mixed gender sport and cultural activities, workshops and promotion of girls' participation as leaders were ways to redress girls' discrimination and 'socialise' them into role models 'beyond marriage'. Parental readiness to give new opportunities to girls made a difference. For those either born in Kakuma or who had spent much of their childhood in displacement, these new ideas of empowerment and gender equity were becoming a reality. UN and NGO staff often commented that girls were the ones "who were coming up." Although girls were still expected to perform the bulk of domestic chores

and many complained about being overworked, some mothers were encouraging their sons to take on cooking, washing, fetching water and cleaning. Nyamai's mother insisted that her younger sons share domestic chores with their sisters since the latter were busy with schoolwork. She told me: "*Now, we have human rights here and girls and boys are equal. They all have to share work."*

Schools were a crucible forging new role models for girls and women (see figure 11). Girls' narratives in Kakuma were influenced by these ideals and reflected new possibilities for Nuer girls and women. During my visit to the Angelina Jolie boarding school, a group of Nuer girls shared their dreams of becoming pilots, doctors, engineers and parliamentarians. They strongly believed, or wanted to believe, that 'male' professions were now attainable. Nyamai also had plans:

> When I finish education, I will become a lawyer. I will go back to Sudan and make people aware of the rights of girls and women. Girls are the ones who are the most discriminated in the community. They have the least rights. But to be a respected woman, I will still need to get married and have children.

Although girls still referred to marriage and children as routes to womanhood, they also saw other possibilities beyond 'being wives and mothers'. Their aspirations revealed their awareness of the need for change of the gender imbalances that kept girls and women in subordinate positions.

In several of the workshops, I noticed girls, especially those who spent most of their lives in the camps, speaking up, taking on leadership roles and presenting their views. Nyamai explained to me her assertiveness:

> My parents are open and they know the meaning of human rights. They see that boys and girls are equal and they wanted me to get good education. Because I am educated and I know about women's rights, I am not afraid to speak up in meetings. Those girls who came recently from Sudan, they are shy and they are still [behind]. They think that speaking in public is only for men. Change will come slowly in Sudan, but because of the education and the UN here, we the girls, we have rights now.

Hence, girls were redressing their weak positions in the community thanks to the freedoms and opportunities that the UN gender-based programming offered. Nyawal, a 15-year old, commented:

> The constitution in [southern] Sudan says that there is equality between men and women, boys and girls, and the rights of women have to be respected. It says that women shall have rights as they are all human beings and they are equal in front of God.

As a result of civic education, gender trainings and Christian doctrine in Kakuma, girls were becoming aware of their rights and the politics of southern Sudan. They joined boys not only in the classrooms traditionally reserved for males, but also in sports fields, cultural clubs, computer courses, workshops and community activities. They walked freely, often by themselves, through the camp, socialised and shared food with boys and dressed like men. Hence, they were subverting gender division of space by 'transgressing' public spaces reserved for men. Through wearing trousers, girls were asserting themselves as 'modern' and 'progressive'. Using the rhetoric of 'rights' girls were skilfully negotiating and expanding their limited freedom space in Kakuma and using their agency in resisting the hegemonic discourse of *cieng nuära*, muting girls' voices (Ortner 1974).

Figure 11: Female role models in the Angelina Jolie boarding school for girls, Kakuma.

Figure 12-14: Vocational training for women; girls school participation, Kakuma.

Changing negotiations around marriage also revealed girls' greater agency. Nyakuoth, who grew up in Kakuma and who at 16 was of a marriageable age, often struggled with community pressure to marry. She pointed out the demographic imbalances and the increased competition over girls as reasons for greater power of girls.

> There are only few girls here in Kakuma. But there are many men. We [girls] have a lot of choice. They all want to marry you, and especially the lost boys who went to America. They come back to marry girls from Kakuma, because they want educated wives. Sometimes, there are two or three of them who try to engage you, and then there is fighting in the community.

This fierce competition among suitors raised the profile of girls and increased their and their parents' bargaining power in negotiating bridewealth. Nyakouth complained that some of the women in the community, including her aunts and her mother's friends, were pressing her to get married.

> You know the worst is my aunt. She tells me that I am a dog not a human being and that I do not care about my family and do not want to help them. They think that I should get married and the wealth will then help my family. My mom was not thinking this way before but these women were pressuring her and telling her that it does not look good in the community if I am not married. Others will say that this is not a good family.

Pressure was also coming from male relatives who saw material advantages in Nyakuoth's marriage through bridewealth, a solution to their difficult financial situation in the camp. In Kakuma, due to the lack of cattle, marriage payments were mainly in cash. Due to the dire situation in the camp where resources were scarce, marriage of girls was seen as a way of improving wellbeing, even if just a temporary solution. Parents expressed their preferences for girls to be married to 'lost boys' as they were able to pay higher bridewealth due to their jobs in resettlement countries and were better placed to provide financial support to the family of the bride. Some girls often did not feel that they could oppose parental decisions. NyaKlang, a girl engaged against her will to a man resettled to the USA, commented: "*You cannot go against your father, otherwise they will say that you are a dog, you will not be seen as a human being. As a girl, you have a duty to assist your family* [through marriage and bridewealth]."

Some girls, like a 17-year old NyaGajak engaged to a US-based Nuer, saw a chance via marriage to a 'lost boy' to access a better life:

> I am happy to be married, to be finally a woman in my home. I will have a title and will be respected in society, especially because my husband is in the US. He will assist me with clothes and nice things and then I can move to Nairobi. You see this watch, [she pointed to a gold shining armed band] it was an engagement present from him. America 'lost boys' are better [as husbands], they have jobs and can provide for you.

Those who were engaged and were already receiving support from their future husbands walked around the camp wearing smart clothes, expensive jewellery and negotiating by mobile phone with rival suitors. Some perceived having their position as women/wives (*ciek*) enhanced through marriage to "educated and somewhat civilised" men, as they often referred to the 'lost boys'. Others were engaged to a 'lost boy' and benefiting from his support while continuing a relationship with a *luum* (boy-friend) in the camp.[158] Not only have girls become a highly desired commodity, they were able to better negotiate their own choices. Girls' narratives, their behaviour and frequent fights over brides signalled changes in girls' power to negotiate marriages.

Some girls were escaping domestic violence, family pressure and arranged marriages through eloping with their boy-friends from the camp or "running" to the UN or NGOs.[159] There were also stories circulating of girls who committed suicide to protest community pressure. Others, like NyaKuoth, used similar threats to exercise their choice. I witnessed several cases of arranged marriages where girls sought UNHCR or NGO protection from families allegedly forcing them to marry 'lost boys'. These were the main cases that the LWF gender unit, UNHCR protection section and Dinka and Nuer courts dealt with. During one court session I learned of the case of a fifteen year-old girl and a 'lost boy' in his late twenties. The girl reported to an NGO that she was being forcibly married but it transpired she had been having two relationships – one with the young man in the USA which her parents perceived as an 'official' engagement as the groom paid initial bridewealth – and another with a man in Kakuma. Matters came to a head when the future husband showed up in Kakuma and the girl turned to LWF claiming that she was being married against her will. The issue was

[158] Conversations with research participants and witnessing cases in the LWF gender unit.
[159] Interviews with LWF gender unit supervisor, UNHCR protection officer and JRS counsellor. See also Kagwanja (2000), Pittaway and Bartolomei (2002) and Ossome (2006).

discussed between the UN and NGO representatives with the families of the girl and the groom. A decision was taken that due to the young age of the girl, the marriage could not go through. Through the policy of 'protecting girls', humanitarian workers were strengthening the position of girls within the households. 'Running for protection [to the UN]' was used by girls not only as a threat to humiliate the family, but also to exercise their agency through the manipulation of the UN policy.

In addition to frequenting *duël gɔ̈ora* (school), *duël kuoth* (church) and workshops, other hallmarks of being 'civilised' as expressed by girls and male youth was through dress code, possession of mobile phones, cooking practices, private hygiene, 'knowing something' and practices of different music and dance (from *buul*[160] to disco). They were expressions of the 'embodied modern identity'. As in other cases of the encounter with modernity discussed in the literature on embodiment among Chinese and Thai migrant women (Ong 1999; Mills 2002), bodies were marked by both 'modernity' and 'difference' – with newly fledged gestures, dress-codes, desires and dreams to represent the 'new' Nuer girl, boy, woman and man.

Some women and older and younger men frowned upon these manifestations of 'freedom'. Commenting on the behaviour of Kakuma girls, Kong, a youth who had spent four years in the camp stated that "*they have gone mad; they are walking loose* (*wa l*oor*ä*). *The school has turned them into prostitutes, they roam around and think they are men.*" Newly-won freedoms and possibilities for girls threatened gender power relations among the Nuer, and southern Sudanese more generally. The metaphor of '*wa l*oor*ä*' describes well the fear, especially by men, of losing control over daughters, sisters and potential wives. Despite being able to wear jeans, mini-skirts and tight tops, to listen to rap music, have boyfriends, attend school, have more scope to negotiate marriages and 'speak up' in public, Kakuma girls were aware these were temporary freedoms. Many feared going to southern Sudan, as they were aware of the lack of freedoms and marginalised position of girls. Nyamai commented: "*Once we go there, we will be forced to marry a local wur nuära* [a metaphor of a scarified illiterate man]. *You can forget about education. In Kakuma, we have some freedom and the UN, at*

[160] In cattle camps, girls and boys go to *buul.* They gather around a fire, dance and court each other to the sound of a drum and singing.

least."[161] This was a feeling shared by some women as well. NayMead, a widow with twins, ran away to Kakuma from her abusive in-laws. Her husband was killed in 2005 in clashes that erupted in Khartoum after John Garang's death. Since then, NayMead's in-laws insisted that she be inherited by one of the male relatives of the husband. However, NyaMead was Christian and refused wife inheritance. She came to Kakuma to escape family pressures, telling me that "*here, I am far away from them and I can feel free*." In the absence of their husbands and relatives, Nuer women, and girls felt relatively 'free' from social obligation. Hence, Kakuma as an extra-territorial space physically distant from the control of relatives and community opened up possibilities of 'transgression' of some of the gender norms, opening up spaces – albeit fleeting – for greater freedoms.

Women in the camp were busy with workshops, training courses, women support groups, community meetings and earning money. Nyakuol, a widow of an SPLA commander, was considered a role model. She spoke in public meetings and men and women regarded her as a *kuäär* (leader/chief). Chatting with a group of women leaders, Nyalada, the chairwoman, explained:

> To be a woman now is more than just giving birth and taking care of home. Yes, these are [still] important. But here in Kakuma, we, the women, have access to education and training. If you are educated, you can also contribute to the family through your work. There is also the UN and women's rights. We are more respected in the community. We are leaders now. Because of much work, Kakuma woman is very tired.

The production of 'new routes' to womanhood was partially due to the UN gender-mainstreaming strategy of 'empowerment' which created new opportunities for women through access to skills, resources, income-generation and leadership (UNHCR 2008c: 28). Also, like Nyakuol and Nyalada, most women in the camp were either widows or single mothers (see chapter 5). In the absence of husbands and older male relatives they were forced to take on more responsibilities in the household. Limited employment prospects for men made women's financial contributions significant for family survival.

[161] See chapters 7-8 for the discussion of gendered experiences of 'return' and emplacement.

Some women, especially those who had been in the camp for long, took advantage of these new possibilities, were learning new skills and earning income as cleaners, midwives, tailors or alcohol brewers. "*If you have a job and can earn money, the man will respect you more. He will be afraid that if he abuses you, you will just go and leave him* [alone]. *If you have a job, you can always support yourself and your children*," explained a young wife. Access to jobs and income were important components in negotiating greater security and autonomy from their husbands in the 'conjugal bargain' (Whitehead 1981). Joy, a widow, commented on the changing notions of womanhood in the camp: "*Because of education, when a girl grows up and is educated, she can get a job and will not longer be a woman, she will be a man. Like boys, the girls will be able to bring benefits to their parents and they will not go away from them*." This view reveals how gender power asymmetries within the Nuer household are based on the material contribution that men and women make. Household and family appear to be not havens of 'harmony' and cooperation, but rather "site[s] of subordination and domination, of sexual hierarchies of many kinds, and of conflicts of interests between its members, especially between husbands and wives" (Whitehead 1981: 92), but also between daughters and parents. Access to independent income allows women an enhanced negotiating position within the household.

UN procedures to fingerprint women and issue them with individual ration cards allowed women and girls greater say with respect to household matters. To be able to be repatriated to Sudan, each potential returnee had to register in person. Nyakuoth, a sixteen-year-old who wanted to continue her education in Kenya, expressed her approval: "*This finger is my power. They* [family] *cannot force me to go back if I do not want*." Decision-making was shifting from the communal – vested in the male household head – to the individual. This was particularly apparent in regard to repatriation decisions. Many households separated as some members decided to remain in Kenya (see chapter 7).

As in other refugee situations (Callamard 1996) ration cards gave women direct control over household's resources and, as mentioned earlier was a source of felt emasculation among men.[162] NyaDak, married to an Anglican pastor, spoke for most women:

> It is better for us women to have access to food rations. We know what to do with it. If it is the man who collects it, he will sell it for alcohol. Women are more responsible because they take care of the family. Now, we can control it better and men have to ask us if they want to sell part of the ration.

UN policies to protect 'women at risk' by seeking to resettle those who experienced domestic violence, rape, social discrimination or were at risk of forced marriage antagonised many men. Bol, NyaDak's husband, complained that women were abusing the system and 'running to the UN', even in most trivial cases. "*You know, Tot, the elder from Akobo. His wife decided to take on another lover and she went to the UN to complain that her husband was abusive. She was resettled to the US with the kids, and later sent a form for the lover to join her*." By using the feminised image of vulnerability where women were perceived by humanitarian workers as being vulnerable and at risk, women were able to manoeuvre greater autonomy. The UN ration card and the gender equality policy brought changes at the household level with women improving their position in the 'patriarchal bargain' (see Kandiyoti 1988, 1998). They also contributed to 'grinding' structures of social power in the household and undermining the material basis of gender asymmetry.

Yet, pro-women policies often had unanticipated effects and ended up marginalising women. Women were often added rather than fully incorporated, into programmes and administrative structures in order to meet the 'gender balance' requirement rather than from a desire to obtain gender equality. Angelina, in her mid-thirties, laughed as she described her experience of workshops:

> These workshops are a funny thing. We, as women, are often called to participate. But then, these trainers, usually men, [NGO or UN] forget that we are illiterate and we do not speak English. They speak all in English, even if they are Nuer, and we, the women, we sit there like stupid, silent, not understanding anything. During the breaks, when men enjoy tea, we sit in the classroom trying to write down all the difficult terms. But we do not know what we are writing. This is useless.

[162] Agnes Callamard (1996) in her study of Mozambican refugees in Malawi argues that access to flour gave women a greater household bargaining power.

Like elder men whose seniority and position in the community were undermined due to lack of English and education, some women felt marginalised for the same reasons. They realised that they were tokens, not participants, that the display of the hierarchical power of the humanitarian regime through the use of English and need for qualifications widened the divide between not only aid workers and refugees, but also between the (mostly illiterate) women and older men and educated youth.

Kakuma was neither exclusively Kenya nor Nuerland but a world of relative freedom for women and men able to 'transgress' gender norms unlike in Sudan which was perceived as a place of entrenched 'real Nuer' gender norms and ideologies. Since the Nuer kinship and family system constructs women as "less able to act as subjects than male subjects are able so to do" (Whitehead 1984: 180), girls had less scope to manoeuvre. Although gender policies in the camp intended to 'empower' and enhance the position of women and girls, the result was not always as intended. Girls who had access to education, leadership coaching and who had spent prolonged time in the camps were gaining stronger positions in the community. Some women enhanced their bargaining power by taking advantage of the essentialised identities as 'women refugees' imposed on them while others suffered disempowerment. Thus, the process of re-shaping and negotiation of new identities was diverse intertwined with other categories of difference including age, wealth and seniority and resulted in the production of multiple, often competing, forms of gender identities.

4. CONTESTING GENDER POWER AND IDEOLOGY

4.1.'Our culture': past and present gender orders

As a place of 'gendered modernity', the camp was an arena of contestation over gender power and ideology. Conversations repeatedly referred to previous times and *cieng nuära* (or as my Nuer English speaking friends referred to 'our culture'). When relating this lives or gossiping about the present women and men referred to 'Nuer village/community culture' (*cieng nuära*) to state their moral position but also to show the supremacy of the past values. Bol, an Anglican elder who had spent over 15 years in Kakuma, commented:

> *Ke cieng nuära,* we used to marry with cows. Women and men knew their roles in the community. Marriages were stable, men had cattle, were the heads of family and protected the home. They were respected by their women and children. Women gave birth to children, cared for them and stayed peacefully without quarrels with their husbands and other co-wives. Children respected the elders, who had the authority in the community affairs. Now, *ke Kakuma*, there is no respect, things are different. Girls run loose, parents cannot control their children, women run to the UN and men are drunkards and sit around idly without anything to do. In Sudan, we marry with cows, and the lives are good. Here the money corrupts everything.

Sarah, a widow in her late fifties, left Sudan in 1988. She went first to Ethiopia so her children could access education. When war broke out in Ethiopia in 1991 they fled via Sudan to Kenya and arrived in Kakuma in June 1992. She reminisced that:

> *Ke cieng nuära*, when a man and a woman got married, a good woman meant that there was no quarrel in the marriage. Woman obeyed and served her husband. To show respect, she did not talk in front of other men and served the food on her knees. If they produce good children, then the family grew nicely together.
>
> *Ke Kakuma*, we do not see anything good here. We cannot cultivate our farms and we cannot have cows. We cannot take care of our own lives, we just have to wait for the distribution centre. Another thing is that the woman can be left by herself with her four children and the husband has gone somewhere else. Or he is a drunkard and sit idly. She is left without anything. Because there are so many children in the camp, she also has to take care of others. And these children have their own minds now, they do not respect mothers and elder women any more. But there are also those women, who have gone mad. They take on lovers in the absence of their husbands and this causes another problem. This is not like the past.

These commentaries about the past life in *cieng nuära* and Kakuma signify not only how things used to be done but how they should be done. *Cieng nuära* was equated with stability, morality and an order located in women's obedience and respect of seniority and gender. For elders, life in Kakuma undermined this certainty and stability, representing moral decay and loss of Nuer community and family values. Their narratives reflect worries about changing patterns of intimate relations between wives and husbands, but also relations between parents and children and between generations.

Both older women and men complained how conditions in the camp had changed the way things used to be and led women astray. At the same time, women were more vocal about the failure of men to fulfil their end of the conjugal bargain. Complaints about the present were not only used by the older generation, but were also common among younger recently arrived men.

Older generation made references to *cieng nuära* to show the structures of authority that once governed the Nuer as well as the duties of good wives, mothers, husbands and children. These narratives reveal their own fears of rapid social changes that were taking places in their communities due to war and lives in refugee camps. They also point to their worries about 'losing control' and position both at home and in the community. This reflects similar concerns of older and younger people in Ado-Odo town described by Andrea Cornwall (2001, 2003) in the wake of experiences with 'modernity'. In their complains about 'wayward women' and 'useless men' of the present, Ado-Odo residents sought to express their concerns with their own authority, livelihoods and reputation being undermined (2001: 69). For the older Nuer in Kakuma, not only have their lifestyles changed due to the experience with particular modernity. They pointed to 'loose girls', 'women running mad' and 'disrespectful youth' as threatening their own position in the communities. These commentaries spoke also about control, agency and autonomy (ibid) and pointed to female agency as main source of concern.

4.2.Reinterpreting 'our culture': gender ideas challenged

For younger men who had arrived from Sudan more recently references to 'tradition' and 'our culture' were usually made to depict a certain gender order. When I came back from southern Sudan to Nairobi, I heard that Nyakuoth, my research assistant whom I had helped with a scholarship to attend a secondary school in Nairobi, had been beaten by her cousin and as a result, run away from her family. When I finally managed to contact her, she told me how her cousin accused her of being a prostitute and having 'boyfriends' just because she was spending time with male school friends who were neither Nuer nor from her clan. When she confronted her cousin, arguing that her life was hers to live, he resorted to violence and beat her until she bled. When I discussed this with her uncle he commented:

> You do not understand our culture. In our culture men beat women and girls when they make mistakes. This is the reason Kong [the cousin] was beating Nyakuoth. […]In our culture, girls do not have boy friends; they do not spend time with boys, this is forbidden. They are seen as prostitutes otherwise.

Kong was adamant about Nyakuoth's 'unacceptable behaviour':

> We don't want this Kenyan culture. If she wants to live like a Kenyan, let her go. She will not be part of the family. We will reject her. She is trying to be a man, she thinks that if she is educated she is a man and that her life is in her hand. She is a Nuer, she is still just a girl.

Another male cousin, who also grew up in Kenya, commented about the changes that Nyakuoth was trying to implement:

> Nyakuoth, you were trying to do something that is not acceptable in our culture. You were living the way you learned how to live in Kenya, in a multicultural environment that is open. But we, the Nuer, are not ready for these changes that you were trying to bring to our culture. I had to do the same. I used to be a basketball player and wore dreads. But your mother and other women in the family advised me strongly that I had to drop this attitude and start behaving like a Nuer in order to be respected. Our culture will not accept mixing with other clans or even tribes. They are not ready for this. You will have to drop this if you want to be part of the family.

After a long discussion with Nyakuoth's mother and cousins, I was able to convince them to let Nyakuoth continue with schooling. However, her cousin Kong and brother Raan decided to ostrasized Nyakuoth from the family. "*She is no longer considered as part of our family. If you want to take care of her, then she will be under your responsibility*," Kong told me. Nyakuoth's mother understood her daughter's intention to pursue education but was in a difficult situation faced with the strong opposition coming from the male relatives. Eventually, Nyakuoth resumed her education and successfully graduated in January 2010. When I talked to her in May 2010, she mentioned that she wanted to study further in order to get a "good job". "*Now that I have defied my family and went against them (especially the men), I need to get a good profession to be able to live my life independenly of them*," Nyakuoth insisted on the phone. "*I want to study international relations so I can be an ambassador one day and show the men in Sudan that women are worth more than just being wives*." In Nyakuoth's case, as some of the other girls whom I befriended, experiences in the camp, access to education and gender equality ideas shaped a new femininity concept. Transforming femininities emphasised women's ambitions for greater freedoms and autonomies, not only financial but also in terms of own choice.

Yak, Nyakuoth's brother, who grew up in the camp, condemned his male relatives:

> These *wutni nuäri* ('traditional' Nuer men) who arrived from Sudan recently, they do not know anything about the life here. They do not understand that the lives of girls are different here. They have rights, according to human rights, and that they

> should not be beaten. They were also educated and have different minds from the girls in the cattle camp in *cieng nuära*. Here, in Kakuma, girls and boys are equal and we do the same work. But these people who arrived recently still live in the past. What they have done to Nyakuoth is not right.

The LWF gender unit supervisor confirmed the challenge of 'reforming' the behaviour of recently arrived men:

> The biggest problem is with Sudanese men …. They are the keepers of the culture. [Through our pro-women programs], we managed to educate some of them, but then they leave for Sudan and new ones arrive here. The ones who are coming now from Sudan are the real perpetrators; they are the guardians of the culture. They cause all the problems and violence in the camp.

These narratives reveal contestations around 'culture' (see chapter 2) located in women's subordination, girls' 'proper behaviour' and men as guardians of gender norms and order. They also point to the challenges Kakuma has brought to the 'order and stability' enshrined in 'our culture' discourse. Kakuma girls' experiments with stretching their freedoms especially challenged men newcomers. These tensions manifest themselves not only in inter-generational conflict, but also in inter-gender conflict, as men, even younger ones, feel challenged and threatened by the 'Kenyan culture' being adopted by young women and men who have spent most of their lives abroad. They feel especially challenged by girls' ability to express themselves and contest some existing hegemonic social structures. They used the discourse of 'our culture' strategically. They often reinterpret the notions of 'tradition' and *cieng nuära* to legitimise their dominance over women and girls. The social control of sexuality and place for girls used to be strictly exercised by any male relative or clansman. Especially the young men recently arrived from southern Sudan took upon themselves the role of 'guardians of culture and tradition', which they often reinterpreted. As discussed in chapter 5, the notions of gender ethnicity among the Nuer were much more flexible before the 1983 wars. Inter-ethnic marriages between Dinka and Nuer were not uncommon and women were not defined as markers of 'culture' (see Hutchinson 1999). However, in the current narratives of Nyakuoth's cousins, the 'mixing with other ethnic groups' is condemned. This illustrates how gender norms of 'ethnic identity' are being redefined with equalising women as markers of 'culture' while men are guardians of upholding 'culture'.

Much feminist literature on nationalism focuses on the role of gender in the construction and reproduction of ethnic-national ideologies (Enloe 1995; Walby 1992; Yuval-Davis 1997; Moghadam 1994; Zarkov 2008). The findings from wars in southern Sudan and displacement in Kakuma confirm that during social and political upheaval women often become the "iconic representations" (Sen 1993) of cultural and/or ethnic-national identity. Hence, Nuer girls and women become bearers of 'tradition' and Nuer culture and men the protectors of the 'culture' and community property (Moghadam 1994).

These narratives also reveal men's fears of 'losing Nuerness' as a result of 'mixing up' with other 'cultures' and challenges to the male-defined gender order. Through recourse to 'our culture' these men attempt to rectify their perceived loss of position in the gender bargain. Their responses were partially a result of the conditions in the camp, girls' education and women and girls' awareness of rights and expanding freedoms due to gender programming. Traditional men's strict reinterpretation of what it means to be a 'Nuer' shows how identities gain importance in confrontation with the 'other' or when a group feels threatened (Schipper 1999).

Resorting to violence to punish 'unacceptable' female behaviour has become commonplace in Kakuma. There has been a significant increase in wife beating.[163] Rising numbers of women and children are accommodated in the JRS Safe Haven and in the UNHCR Protection Area (JRS Kakuma 2006; UNHCR Kenya 2006). JRS in 2003 admitted 25 women for security reasons, reported 28 new cases in 2004 and in 2005 accommodated 30 women and their families (JRS Kakuma 2006). At the time of my stay in Kakuma, both protection areas were at full capacity. JRS was hosting 13 women with children (40 people) and UNHCR had 15 houses filled with women and their children. During the weekly meetings of the LWF gender unit, I listened to reports of numerous cases of domestic violence. In the conversations with Nuer women and girls I often heard complains about domestic violence. Beatings were perpetrated by fathers, husbands and other male relatives against women but also by women beating their daughters or younger children. Women and men often attributed the high level of

[163] LWF Kakuma gender report 2006, interviews with NGO and UN staff.

violence to the difficult socio-economic situation in Kakuma. The comments of Sarah, an elderly woman, were typical:

> Men have nothing to do, they go idle, drink and then rape girls. Fathers fear they are not men as they cannot work, they drink and then beat their wives and children. Women are frustrated because they have not enough food at home, so they beat their daughters. There is a lot of crying in Kakuma.

Thwarting of masculinities (see Moore 1994) revealed itself in imposing men's dominance over women (and children) through violence.

Family and home was seen as a place of control and gender power. A young boy in Kakuma explained to me the male-dominated model of the Nuer family:

> Even if the wife is better educated, you the man, you are still in control of the family. People cannot be the same in sharing power and control. Because when you marry a girl she comes to your house as your wife. You as a man you are in control over the family life. […] You must be the person who control the family decisions since you paid bride-price for the girl.

Even some of the Nuer men educated in Kenya often took a position of guardians of 'culture and gender traditions' and imposed their dominance over girls, and women, through physical violence, gossip and public shaming. Despite their acquired proficiency in gender equality jargon, when it comes to rights for their sisters and female cousins they feel their own power and position is threatened. During a workshop on gender issues for prospective returnees, men debated the idea of an educated wife. They all agreed that especially those men who were in Sudan would never accept an educated wife. "*This is against their culture for a wife to control the family. Other men would laugh at you*," commented Eliah, an 18-year old. Fears of losing position among their peers was related to the behaviour of others. They resorted to chastising women in order not to lose face. Hence, some of the freedoms for girls, such as interactions with boys at school, in public places, in the church or while playing sports were acceptable in the camp, but condemned outside. Thus, 'emancipation' and greater gender equality were linked to a particular space and strategic, not universal.

Although all recognised that there were changes in the *cieng nuära* due to displacement and encounters with 'gendered modernity' in Kakuma, 'change' was not an easy thing. During a gender workshop I asked participants to identify customs which they felt they

would like to 'change'. Women and men pointed to forced marriages, lack of freedom of movement for girls, wife inheritance and girl's inability to choose husbands. In other conversations, women often complained about the physical violence that men exerted over them, and the fact that bridewealth limited their autonomy within the household. However, they also recognised the challenge of changing some of these customs. A young educated man at the workshop summarised the paradox succinctly:

> The fact that we all say that things can be changed in our culture might be because we would like to change them. However, in fact change is very difficult, because we were taught by our ancestors that traditions are written in stone and there are there to protect our society and community and they are the things that make us. Hence, if we say that we would like to change them – we might be cheating ourselves.

Hence, 'change' of 'culture' was a threatening prospect for some as it undermined their dominant position. It reveals the contestation of the gender hegemony as defined in chapter 2. Gramsci's insights into the structure of hegemony rather than 'culture' show how resistance and acquiescence are accommodated within the hegemonic discourses of gender norms. War, displacement and experiences in Kakuma have created a structural challenge to the gender ideology and power in Nuer and Sudanese society. However, these changes pull and push in different directions, while constantly being (re)negotiated and practiced. Displacement creates opportunities (albeit contested ones) for girls and women to reconfigure some of the gender asymmetries, while men (and some women), especially those who grew up in Sudan, strongly resist more freedoms for girls and women.

Kakuma's significance for the (re)negotiation and practice of gender relations can be interpreted through the 'relativity' theory proposed to understand the Nuer. Sahlin argues (1968) that Nuer actions are relative and situational rather than universal imperatives depending on whom it concerns (rather than whether it is universality bad or good). In Kakuma, the relativity has extended to the place. Hence, practicing different gender relations in the camp was possible because it was not a Nuer space – it was a *jääl*'s (foreign) space not *cieng nuära*. In *cieng nuära*, the Nuer have to adapt to village life. Using *cieng nuära* ('our culture') and 'tradition' reveals conflicts and contestations around changing gender ideas and allocation of rights and duties. In this way, (reinterpreted) tradition and 'culture', as contested and strategic concepts

(Hobsbawm and Ranger 1985; Cowan 1990; Cornwall 2001) are used to express not only nostalgia for the 'past lost order' manifested in *cieng nuära*, but also dismay of the moral corruption currently afflicting gender order. Nuerland and 'home' was often idealised by the older generation and some younger men as a place of stability and 'morality' and a set of rules and specific gender relations. Return to Sudan was equated with 'return' to stability and normality, where gender and generational relations would be re-established and "there will be *luth* (respect) again".

5. CONCLUSION

Notions of being and becoming 'modern' and aspirations to become 'modern' are a palpable and potent ideology throughout most, if not all, of Africa. Young people are especially likely to appropriate notions of development, modernity and progress, reworking them and at the same time reassessing their future through them, trying to make sense of their present and dire condition. As I have demonstrated, refugee camps, as temporary spaces of extra-territorial protection, are also spaces where particular forms of 'modernity' are forged. The structural, imposed, dislocated and gendered 'modernity' in Kakuma was a result of the highly hierarchical refugee regime, its attachment to gender equality as well as other encounters with 'modernity' in the camp. Refugees are subject to dramatic changes in their livelihoods with reliance on food aid, lack of control over livelihoods and as a result of education and training programmes. These changes have direct impact on the negotiation and everyday practice of social and gender relations among refugees.

"It is only at the point of breakdown that every order reveals its systematic contradictions" (Kandiyoti 1988: 285-286). For the Nuer, the wars and displacement that followed represented that point of breakdown. Displacement and experiences of particular gendered 'modernity' in Kakuma led to political, economic and social relations that dramatically unsettled previously taken-for-granted gender arrangements. Although modern-minded young men mastered gender- and pro-women talk, and although girls and women gained better access to education and autonomous income-generation, the UN's attempts at women's emancipation did not necessarily lead to greater gender equality. Some of the material basis of men's dominance over women

and seniority-based power relations were challenged. This resulted in many older men feeling emasculated and stripped of position and control over women and children. Girls' and women's 'transgressions' of *cieng nuära* gender norms reveal female agency in contesting the prevailing hegemonic gender structures. Yet these contestations often met with a violent response by those – particularly older men and those recently arrived from Sudan – who felt their authority, livelihoods and power were at stake.

Kakuma represented to some extent an extra-territorial space, 'not home', where some gender and social relations could be transformed, questioned and re-negotiated. This is similar to other displacement situations. In the case of Tamil and Muslim women in post-conflict zones in north-east Sri Lanka, Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake describes the opportunities and the relative freedoms that present themselves to internally displaced, especially the younger generation who distance themselves from caste and gender hierarchies, acquire responsibilities, engage with the authorities and discover new "spaces of economic agency" (Behera and Thapan 2008: 178). In Kakuma, 'different behaviour' was tolerated, but controlled through the violence of emasculated men. The new behaviour of young men and especially girls and young women was perceived as threatening to the 'moral order'. As a result, gender ideology becomes more articulated and redefined in terms of girls' subordination and gender power differences/asymmetries widen.

A refugee camp as a space is not only about suffering, poverty and violation of human rights (see Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005; Smith M. 2004). Kakuma is also a space of expanded possibilities of, in the words of the Nuer, 'coming up', 'becoming modern and civilised', 'being someone' and 'being a better person'. Through their encounter with a particular UN global humanitarianism 'modernity', the Nuer imaginaries of themselves have undergone questioning and transformation. Through access to education, awareness of gender equality and human rights, new gender identities of people who have awoken/see light (*nei ti cike ker*) are being imagined and forged. Attempts of Kakuma youth at worldliness through education and 'talk', diasporic connections, dress-code and new body language sought to minimise their marginality as refugees. They reflect claims for equal rights of membership in an unequal global society (Gable 2007). Yet at the same time, the global humanitarian regime is based on highly hierarchical relations and its attachment to gender equality produces a particular

encounter with ‘modernity for ‘localised’ refugees. The making of ‘the other’ closer to ‘western modern us’ is promoted through the exposure to human rights and western standards of ‘modernity’. I argue that youth, both female and male, in the kind of societies that Clifford Geertz called “out of the way places” become often ‘modern’ or ‘awoken’ (*nei ti cike ker*) at least in their aspirations, their fashions, fantasies, desires (Gable 2007) and their social imaginaries of themselves (Taylor 2002). Nuer youth – male and female – imagine themselves, on the one hand, capable of worldliness, while on the other hand, some young men assert an abiding commitment to locality and their ‘roots’ through the discourse of ‘our culture’.

Although some change in gender ideology was possible in Kakuma, in *cieng nuära*, as the Nuer argued, “*we have to practice the culture* [identity] *of the grandfathers*.” ‘Home’ was idealised through the discourse of ‘our culture’ and had profound consequences for the repatriation aspirations and decisions of the Nuer. Return to Nuerland was, however, viewed differently by genders and generations, as they are differently positioned in the new system of gender relations.

Figure 15: Repatriation flight of Nuer refugees from Kakuma to Bentiu, December 2006.

Figure 16: Ler, southern Sudan, January 2007.

CHAPTER 7

RWIL[164]: SEASON OF 'RETURNS'

At Home

At home is where we belong
At home is where we make our own choices and decisions
At home is where we are chosen to be leaders
Leaders of our own people
At home is where we talk
Talk about our people's affairs
Yes east or west home is the best
(Dau, young refugee man, Kakuma)

"As any displaced and dispossessed person can testify, there is no such thing as a genuine, uncomplicated return to one's home" (Edward Said, 1999)

1. NYAKUOL AND KUOK

In early January 2007 after arrival in Ler, I visited Nyakuol, a widow I had met in Kakuma. A leader of the women's support group in the Nuer community in Kakuma, she spoke openly against under-age pregnancies and girls' lack of access to education. From a prominent family in Ler – her grandfather was a chief and her father an influential elder – Nyakuol married in the early 1980s an SPLA commander from Equatorian ethnic group and subsequently moved with him to a military base in Torit in Equatoria. She gave birth to four children before her husband died in 1991 under questionable circumstances in Nairobi. In search of refuge in Ethiopian camps, she moved to Nassir in eastern Nuerland. At that time Sudanese refugees were expelled from Ethiopia and thus, she returned to Ler. In 1995, when the war in the region intensified, her brother-in-law, who inherited her, arranged for the family to be transferred to Kakuma camp. In Kenya, she had two children with him. Fearing her husband's family would take her children, she decided to move to the Nuer community in the camp. In December 2006, together with her four children she repatriated through UNHCR to Bentiu. Her oldest daughter was resettled with a cousin to the USA while the oldest son chose to stay in Kakuma to complete his secondary education.

On arrival in Ler, Nyakuol's sister, Nyapiny, gave her temporary shelter. She lived on a small plot next to the landing strip. The family had been influential and prosperous

[164] *Rwil*, from the middle of March till the middle of June, is the season of moving from cattle camp (*wec*) to village (*cieng*) and to clear and plant fields. I use it as a metaphor of movement from the refugee camp to Nuerland.

with large herds and plots of land. As a result of wars cattle were killed and land taken by the government, Nyakuol's parents died and her siblings were dispersed. Three sisters and a brother went to Khartoum while the eldest brother moved to Juba. Nyapiny, Nyakuol's elder sister, returned from Khartoum in 2005. Like all her sisters, she was a widow, having lost her husband in 2002 while four of her six children died during the inter-Nuer conflict. In 2001, she sent her daughter and her son to Nyakuol in Kakuma. The daughter was impregnated by a young Nuer man and in 2004 resettled to Australia. Nyapiny's son, Koi, finished class 6 and came back to Ler with Nyakuol's family. In 2007, Nyakuol's other siblings returned from Khartoum.

When I saw Nyakuol in Ler, she told me she had found NyaPiny who had given her a hut. She had settled temporarily, having to wait for a survey until the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) gave her land. Nyakuol's family of seven and Nyapiny's of three shared two small huts. In Nyakuol's *duël*, there was only one bed and two chairs. Suitcases she had brought from Kenya were piled up in the corner: "*I wanted to come back to see my family and because my friends were leaving* [Kakuma] *and I was alone. I wanted to have a permanent place. Kakuma was not home, we were there only because of war.*"

Her return 'home' was, however, difficult:

> When we arrived here, there was not much support. The UNHCR took us by plane to Bentiu and then transported us by bus to Ler. We were maybe 50 heading for Ler. They gave us some food, sorghum, rice, oil and dried beans. That was supposed to last for three months. But when you come home, you have to make gifts to your family and relatives. There are many guests who come to greet you. The food was eaten within a month. Now, the cultivation period is over and we have no food.
>
> At the beginning I was very happy to be back. I was with my family whom I have not seen for over ten years. Now, many of them are also returning to Ler. My twin sister who is in Khartoum, I have not seen her since 1983. I wanted to come home to be with my family. But now things are getting difficult. I am very unsettled.
>
> Our life here is hard because we have no money. Now, in Sudan, if you have no *yiou* [money], you cannot get food. Everything here is about money. Our land is gone and the cows are dead. I have to rely on my family [for support]. I want to first *nyiuuri piny* [settle down] - to have a permanent land and *duël* [house] – and then I need a job. In Kakuma, I used to work with IRC [International Rescue Committee] as a midwife, and I was a leader of women there. I have all my certificates from courses that I took in Kakuma so this might help me to get a job. I am a widow and I have to rely on myself to provide for the family. No one else is going to help me. I decided to settle far from my husband's family and now I need to manage. I am worried that my children will not be able to go to school. Here, there are no good schools.

In April, I met Kuok whom I knew from Kakuma (see chapters 5 and 6). He recently came to Sudan on his own rather than through the UNHCR repatriation. "*This is just in case if I do not like the life here in Sudan, I can always go back to Kakuma. But once you have gone with the UN and gave back your refugee card, you cannot go back to Kenya*," he explained. "*The overland journey was dangerous, especially on the border with Kenya and Uganda where there was shooting. The SPLA escort accompanied our convoy that carried wives and children of high-ranking soldiers who were going to visit their husbands in Juba.*"

When Kuok arrived in the southern Sudanese capital Juba he felt lost, knowing nobody. Through tracing his ethnic and clan connections, he finally found a half brother working in Juba. When I met Kuok in Ler, he had just arrived from Juba and was searching for his relatives. His parents were dead, as were his brother and a younger sister. His elder sister together with her family was still in Ler. He also found some of his uncles and learned that many others had died during the war. After this 20-year absence Kuok was coming back:

> *Beben cieng* [home/village/community-coming] is more of a process that takes time. Some of the returnees from Kakuma get frustrated after a short time and they decide to go back [to Kenya]. This is because they are not settled, they go from place to place, they do not have a house; it is difficult to get a job. There is discrimination against the East African returnees by those who stayed here. When you go to Bentiu [the capital of Unity state], everything is in Arabic and you cannot find a job if you do not speak the language. When you speak English, they do not know what you are saying.
>
> For the people, security is the most important. They need to know that their area is secure and that they can feel safe at home. Also, they need to know that they can establish themselves, find their relatives, get a piece of land, build a house and be settled. […]Here the peace is still [not stable]. We are not sure whether it will really last. There are some people who talk about unity with the Arabs and this will create a lot of problems. People still do not trust.

For the rest of my stay in Nuerland, I followed the stories of Nyakuol, Kuok and many of their friends from Kakuma in their journeys of *beben cieng* (homecoming) and *nyuuri piny* (settling-in) after years, sometimes decades, of being away. What do home, 'homecoming' and settling-in mean in the context of refugee return? How do notions of 'home' and emplacement differ when gender, age, class and marital status are taken into account? The existing forced displacement literature is rather silent on these

questions. In the next two chapters, I use the gender lens to unpack meanings of 'home', decision-making and processes of 'homecoming' and settling-in in the lived experiences of women and men, young and old. I analyse these experiences in the context of relations with those who had stayed behind ('stayees') or were displaced elsewhere.

In this chapter, my concern is predominantly the gendered and generational notions of and experiences of 'home' and settling-in. First, I situate the discourse of refugee repatriation and return within the theoretical concepts related to place, home and emplacement and use feminist analysis to provide a gendered definition of emplacement and homecoming. Next, I locate the process of 'return' and 'emplacement' of the Nuer in the refugee repatriation from Kakuma as part of a wider regional 'return' of displaced populations and changes that took place at 'home' and among 'stayees'. I argue that displacement as a process is irreversible and emplacement is a creative adaptation, a process of cultural and social (personal) transformation. Lastly, I ask how 'emplacement' is realised through gendered and generational experiences of access to resources, in particular land, and the (re)building of livelihoods.

I also focus on the effects of emplacement on gender relations among 'returnees' and those who had stayed behind. Are these processes reversing established gender relations and opening up possibilities of greater gender equality? What are the gains and losses in terms of gender access to resources and livelihoods for women and men, old and young, in the context of 'refugee return'? The chapter attempts to provide some answers. Chapter 8 focuses on the challenges to gender identities and institution of marriage as experienced by the 'returnees'. These chapters attempt to untangle complexities of the emplacement process highlighting how concepts of 'home' and 'place-making' are intertwined with the web of social (gender) relations and are not only a physical place.

2. MOVEMENT, PLACE AND GENDERED EMPLACEMENT

The context for analysing the gendered and gendering processes of 'homecoming' and settling-in of Nuer refugees is what the (forced) migration literature calls 'return' and

'repatriation' of displaced populations. As I argued in chapter 2, these terms are based on sedentarist assumptions about the relation between people, place and culture. Hammond notes that these processes are meant to replant people back in their culture linked to the place of origin (1999). In this section, I set out the analytical context of the relation of 'return' and 'repatriation' to a 'place', 'home' and the processes of 'emplacement'.

Hammond offers a poignant critique of the humanitarian discourse of repatriation:

> Terms to be found in the discourse of repatriation include: *reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, rebuilding, readjustment, readaptation, reacculturation, reassimilation, reinsertion, reintroduction, recovery*, and *re-establishment* (Gmelch 1980; Allen and Morsink 1994; Allen 1996). Among the most problematic terms of the repatriation canon are the words *return* and *returnee*, which imply that by reentering one's native country a person is necessarily returning to something familiar. These terms are riddled with value judgments that reflect a segmentary, sedentary idea of how people ought to live, what their relation to the homeland should be, and ultimately how they go about constructing their lives once the period of exile ends. The implication of these terms is that returnees should seek to move back in time, to recapture a quality of life that they are assumed to have enjoyed before becoming refugees or that those who remained behind currently enjoy. [Moreover] because post-repatriation life, or 'home' in the discourse of repatriation, is rooted in the country of origin it is considered by outsiders to be necessarily better that the life in exile (1999: 230).

This cuts to the heart of the policy of repatriation organisations. UNHCR identifies local integration, resettlement or repatriation as durable solutions for refugees, with the latter being the preferred solution (Kibreab 1999). As other authors have noted, these discourses are rooted in the notion of "territorialized national identity" (Malkki 1995a; Hammond 2004a; Bakewell 2000; Lubkemann 2008). By implication, displacement and war-time migration mean losing one's place and rooted identity, culture and social relations. Meanwhile, return is necessarily equated with re-entering one's own culture, identity and community linked to a specific place. As Hammond points out, putting people "back into their place" (equated with birthplace) becomes for policymakers and practitioners an ultimate 'cure' for the 'refugee problem' (1999:23). She adds that this is connected to the assumption that once in their own place people will re-establish the economic self-sufficiency, re-construct social networks and become full participants in community/society and citizens with access to rights (ibid).

The notion that return is a 'natural' and 'optimal solution' has been questioned by many (Harrell-Bond 1989; Rogge 1988, 1994; Malkki 1992, 1995b; McSpadden 1999; Dolan 1999; Black and Koser 1999; Kibreab 1999; Hammond 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Rodgers 2002; Lubkemann 2002, 2005, 2008; Turton 2003; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Janzen 2004; Steffansson 2004). Their studies have shown that prolonged, devastating wars, ongoing conflicts, insecurity and lack of infrastructure might not only make it impossible but also impractical for some to return. As Koser and Black note, "[The] implicit assumption that at the end of the conflict, a return to a 'place' called 'home' is both possible and desirable … can be questioned in both its aspects: return 'home' may be impossible" (1999: 7). Those who have developed strong ties and established their lives in countries of exile might not want to give up opportunities that these places offer. These new social and economic investments made over years in exile make some refuse return to their place of origin (Allen and Turton 1996; Bascom 1998; Dolan 1999). Also, shifts in social and gender relations and new possibilities of greater gender equality in countries of resettlement might make some women (and men) reluctant to lose newly gained status and freedom (McSpadden 1999). Economic opportunities and greater possibilities of actual enjoyment of rights in countries of exile might also discourage return (Kuhlman 1991; Malkki 1995b; Sommers 2001; McSpadden 2004; Jacobsen 2006; Eastmond 2006; Kibreab 2008).

For nomadic or agro-pastoralist populations such as the Nuer, as Malkki (1995, 1999), Turton (2005), Hammond (1999, 2004a) and Bakewell (1999) and others have argued, 'displacement' as well as 'return' rarely reflect their life-worlds and life-paths. Nuer social identities and livelihoods are both localised and mobile (*yodth* – migration) linked to cattle migration (chapter 4) and coupled with labour and trade. The recent conflict-induced migration, although undertaken under extreme conditions of insecurity and often marked by rupture of social and economic networks, was often referred to by the Nuer as 'movement' (see chapter 5). "*They went/ran/moved to Ethiopia, Khartoum, Kenya* [*cako wa Kenya*]" were phrases that the Nuer used to describe their war-time mobility. These various movements were accompanied by 'spatial practices' to produce and maintain a "precarious sense of place" (Turton 2005: 265) in contested and new environments. In Kakuma, Nuer local courts and creation of a local Nuer administration to address the issues of the Nuer community were ways to establish and maintain continuity to a 'place'. So were the references to *cieng nuära* (Nuer

culture/community) and insistence on observing some of the gender norms and practices, including marriage process, closely scrutinised by usually male elders (see chapter 6). The question that follows is how the Nuer experience 'return' to their *cieng* (community/village/home) after forced displacement?

These issues are located at the centre of academic debates about 'place', 'home' and identity. Preoccupied with globalisation's impact, anthropologists have been laying down the groundwork for a theory of place (see Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Appadurai 1996; Feld and Basso 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Olwig and Hastrup 1997). There has also been much debate on the concept of 'place' as a field-site (Clifford 1997; Appadurai 1988; Feld and Basso 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Strathern 1988) and human geographers have drawn distinctions between the concepts of 'location' and 'place' (Casey 1996; Massey 1994). For example, Edward Casey (1996; 1997) provides a phenomenological definition of 'space' and 'place'. He argues against the notion of 'space' as a neutral, infinite and empty environment, and 'place' as space inscribed with culture. According to Casey, place provides a way for space and time to come together. Hence, identity and being is directly linked to place.[165]

To analyse the experiences of 'return' and 'settling-in' of Nuer refugees I use Turton's notion of "place-making project"[166] (2005) which he deploys to describe the relation between a group of Ethiopian agro-pastoralists and place. Turton demonstrates how the Mursi establish the "meaning of place in a world of movement" (2005:268) and how the inextricable link between personhood and place come about (2005:259). He shows

[165] Other literature detaches the concept of culture from place and proposes a more fluid concept of 'locality' as a web of global and regional relations brought by flow of resources, information, money, goods and people. The force of globalisation is perceived in linking the most distant communities to global power structures through the flow of capital, media diasporic connections and migration (Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997; Malkki 1992, 1994). Appadurai (1988, 1990), Said (1979, 1986), Clifford (1988), Rosaldo (1989), Hannerz (1987), Hebdige (1987) and others have recently suggested that notions of nativeness and native places become very complex as more and more people identify themselves, or are categorised, in reference to deterritorialised 'homelands', 'cultures' and 'origin'. These global generalisations of production of cultural and social relations do not leave much scope to explore how specific communities define their own identity and 'place' which they refer to as 'home'. They also sideline the issues of territory of nation-states as repository of rights (see Kibreab 1999).

[166] Turton develops his argument based on Appadurai's "locality production" (1996). Appadurai defines 'locality' as a 'phenomenological quality' or dimension of social life and distinguishes it from 'neighbourhood', which he defines as "an actually existing" social form in which locality is "realised'" (1996: 178-179). While 'neighbourhood' is an alternative to 'place' as it "suggests sociality, immediacy and reproducibility" (1996: 204), Turton suggests that 'locality' is synonymous with 'sense of place' (2005: 267).

how for the Mursi identity is bound up with place and is "a product, rather than a cause, of movement" (2005:267). Turton demonstrates how the Mursi's place in the world is produced and maintained through a variety of "spatial practices", carving the relation between "subject" and "territory" (2005:265). At the same time, the precarious sense of place is constructed in a 'contested environment' influenced by other 'place-making projects', such as those of the Ethiopian state. Turton argues that "how people experience place, and how it becomes inextricably bound up with their social and personal identities …. is a product of social activity" (2005:275). Hence, the place is produced through spatial practices and representations, with human beings as active agents in the construction of places. This notion is especially useful to understand the activities and 'place-making' projects that the displaced Nuer undertook after 'return' to their villages/communities (*cieng*) in Nuerland and their description of these places as sites of security, stability and authenticity, a contrast to their seemingly temporary relocation in the undifferentiated and unfamiliar 'place' of Kakuma.

'Place-making projects' in the context of settling-in of 'returnees' have been defined as 'emplacement'. Hammond in her study of the experiences of Ethiopian returnees in Ada-Bai demonstrates how emplacement involves "the interworking of place, identity and practice in such a way as to generate a relationship of belonging between person and place" (2004a: 83). Hammond (2004a) and de Alwis (2004) demonstrate in their accounts of experiences of place by returnees and refugees respectively how these groups have been successful in transforming such abstract, and hence often threatening, spaces into familiar places or territories through material and representational practices that endow them with the value and belonging (cf. Tuan 1977:6 quoted in de Alwis 2004: 215). Such analyses demonstrate the fluidity and dynamism of 'place' and they give useful insights to unpack the economic, social and political practices that Nuer employed in Ler to transform the (often unfamiliar) place to 'something like home'. Nuer women and men described emplacement as *nyuuri piny* – which literally means "sitting on the ground/earth". It is a metaphor for a process of settling-in and becoming part of a community.

To analyse 'emplacement' in the context of refugee return I expand Turton's and Hammond's arguments by adding the gender and generational lens.[167] Turton and Hammond acknowledge that emplacement and place-making are gendered and generational. My analysis examines how these processes in situations of forced displacement are are both affected and influence (and trigger transformations in) gender and generational relations. The rest of this chapter engages with the social, economic and physical 'place-making projects'. I demonstrate how through the emerging creative practices of building physical 'homes', accessing land and livelihood resources the Nuer engaged in shaping "senses of place" (Feld and Basso 1996) and turning a changed, or unfamiliar place into a 'home'. Chapter 8 focuses on the societal and relations practice of gender identities and marriage as gendered and generational place-making projects.

For southern Sudanese dispersed throughout Sudan, Africa and the world, transformations during the wars might have altered the meaning of 'home' and the desire to 'return'. It is thus imperative to examine refugees own conceptualisations and meaning of repatriation, as well as expectations and imaginings of 'home' (see Koser and Black 1999; Lubkemann 2008).

3. CONTEXT OF EMPLACEMENT: DIASPORIC RETURNS, PLACE AND 'HOME'

The experience of emplacement for the Nuer in my study was in the context of repatriation from Kakuma. It was part of a wider diasporic patchwork of 'homecomings' of populations displaced to variety of places, to a place, 'home', that went through transformations during the wars. I describe each of these aspects below.

3.1. Repatriation from Kakuma within the patchwork of returns

On an exploratory visit to the region in April 2006, in the eastern Nuerland town of Malakal, I witnessed the arrival of a repatriation plane with refugees from Kakuma. Some 60 nicely dressed women, young men and children disembarked. Girls and

[167] In his study of the experience Afghan refugees with humanitarian assistance, Paulo Novak (2007) expands the notion of 'place-making' pointing out that there are several overlapping projects simultaneously encompassing territory and individuals. However, his arguments pay no attention to gender and generational differences.

women were neatly coiffured and young men wore rapper style t-shirts, elegant trousers and earrings. They were welcomed by UNHCR and its partner organisations and taken to a way-station, a temporary accommodation place, where they were given food and transport to their final destination. The reception of the returnees was not well coordinated. The way-station was still under construction and people were accommodated in a large tent surrounded by mud. At night, it rained heavily and all their belongings and food were drenched. UNHCR was not able to transport people to their final destination and instead, returnees had to make their own arrangements. Ruan, a young returnee man, whom I met later in Rubkona, shared with me their experience:

> It was really tough, we have not been to Sudan in a long time, and they took us to a place that was not our place. I used to be a youth leader in Kakuma so I organised people and told them to sell their food rations. For the money we received, we rented a truck that took us to the river from where we embarked on a boat. After a five day-long river journey, we arrived in Rubkona. We were all exhausted and many of us still needed to travel more to reach our villages.

When I first arrived in Kakuma, the official repatriation to Sudan organised by UNHCR and supported by the Tri-Partite Agreement (2006) between the governments of Kenya and Sudan and UNHCR was underway. Trucks decorated with UNHCR and New Sudan flags, loaded with luggage and filled with Sudanese, mainly young men, were leaving Kakuma every week for the border with Sudan. The Nuer (and Dinka) were mainly transported by air as their 'homes' were far from the border, with small 50-seaters carrying returnees to their old/new homeland. I followed several repatriation convoys and witnessed preparation for flights in Kakuma and reception in southern Sudan. Nyakuol, who was introduced at the beginning of the chapter, as well as another 250 Nuer who arrived in Western Upper Nile between November and December 2006 were repatriated through UNHCR. Others, including Kuok and large numbers of the 'lost boys', decided to go by themselves or with the support of Sudanese churches, the SPLA or local organisations. Daily, numerous taxis, mini-buses and trucks filled with elegantly dressed southern Sudanese departed Kakuma heading north.

UNHCR's repatriation was part of a regional repatriation operation. By January 2010, according to UNHCR's statistics, some 320,000 refugees from the region had been

repatriated to Sudan, including 153,000 assisted by UNHCR.[168] During my stay in Kakuma, repatriation was slow, with only 1,800[169] individuals repatriated in 2006, but it picked up during 2007 and 2008, with some 15,000 returning to Sudan through UNHCR (UNHCR 2009). By the beginning of 2010, out of 75,000 registered Sudanese in 2005, only 8,000 remained in Kakuma. Some 47,000 either returned to Sudan by themselves or moved like many of the research participants to other towns in Kenya or Uganda. For example, the mother of Nyakuoth moved with her four children to Nairobi where she enrolled them in schools. "*I am not ready to go to Sudan yet. First, I want to make sure that my children finish school. I am worried that there is no chance for them in Sudan* [due to lack of schools]," she explained. Others decided to delay their move to southern Sudan due to perceived insecurity, livelihoods options and infrastructure in southern Sudan. Some people initially registered for return, but then changed their minds before departure, a practice that frustrated humanitarian personnel. For example, although some 600 people registered for Bentiu (the capital of the Unity state in Western Upper Nile) in 2006, in the end only 250 departed. Pajok, a young man, a member of the repatriation committee in Kakuma, explained:

> They are worried that there are no schools or health centres in Sudan, that there is no security and no jobs. They wait for those who go first to bring back messages about the situation in Sudan and then they will make up their minds about going. Others still see that they have more opportunities here in the camp than in Sudan. They can get jobs and trainings here and they still want to continue with their education.

While refugees worried about their prospects of establishing viable livelihoods in southern Sudan, much of the repatriation discourse of the UN and other humanitarian agencies was focused on numbers. Although according to UNHCR, repatriation involves also successful 'reintegration' of returnees, in the official reports success was mainly measured in terms of numbers of those who crossed the border. In its evaluation report of the UNHCR-supported repatriation to southern Sudan, UNHCR notes:

> The UNHCR has achieved a major success in southern Sudan in supporting the voluntary repatriation of more than 135,334 refugees between late 2005 and May 2008. This represents a significant achievement, involving Tripartite agreements with five neighboring countries, at one time, the simultaneous operation of four repatriations corridors. Despite security problems resulting from the activities of the

[168] http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/southsudan?page=news&id=4991a8de2 (accessed February 26, 2010)
[169] Among them, there were some 850 Nuer (UNHCR Kenya 2008).

> Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and other armed groups, the widespread presence of mines and UXOs, and significant logistical challenges, the organised return process has taken place in conditions of safety and dignity. The operation, moreover, has resulted in the closure of refugee camps in the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ethiopia (2008e: 6).

The information, mobilisation and registration campaign was underway during my stay in Kakuma. Information was disseminated through leaflets, meetings and films. Camp residents were informed about the situation in southern Sudan and UNHCR propagated the idea of 'home'. Humanitarian workers and refugee volunteers wore t-shirts with pro-return slogans: 'Sudan: There is nowhere better than home'; 'Let's go home'. UNHCR and NGOs sponsored several visits of senior southern Sudanese politicians who shared their views on the situation in southern Sudan and urged return. A commissioner of Eastern Equatoria addressed a crowd of mainly young male refugees:

> Your country is very important and you should come back to rebuild it. You have to decide, but if you come home you will be somebody. Don't ask to go to Australia, America, you will be nobody there, you will be a slave. We need teachers, doctors. All ministers and governors will come from you.

Other officials compared return to Sudan with gaining control over their lives: "*We have been refugees for too long. We have to relieve ourselves from this agony. This thing has been engrained in our blood for too long. Let us rebuild our country ourselves*." Another commissioner compared southern Sudan to a cow: "*Who will take care of the cow* [if you are not there]? *There is no one there to take care of the cow and the cow will be eaten by a hyena. It is time to go and take care of the* [abandoned] *cow*." 'Return to Sudan' was interpreted as a process of becoming an adult and acquiring wider community responsibilities.

Those interested in repatriation were not only mobilised, registered and informed. They were also medically screened, sensitised and trained in mine-awareness, gender and human rights, hygiene, sanitation and civic rights. Although repatriation was supposed to be 'voluntary',[170] it was also 'encouraged' through the gradual limiting of services

[170] UNHCR-sponsored repatriation is based on principles of 'voluntary' return in safety and dignity. In Kakuma, voluntariness was ensured through individual registration of those interested in returning and signing a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VolRep). Safety and dignity principles were supposed to be fulfilled by providing detailed information to the communities about the conditions in southern Sudan, including security, infrastructure, economic and social stability. It meant that return could not take place to areas deemed unsafe. Returnees were provided with transportation either by road or air from the

provided to refugees in the camp. The UNHCR and NGOs were closing schools and health clinics and cutting food rations. A young man reflected a common view: "*We are going to Sudan not because we really want to, it is because of the budget cuts in the camp. You cannot survive here any longer. The life has become too hard*." This was also one of the reasons why Nyakuol and Kuok decided to move to Nuerland. Those who had family members working in Sudan or in resettlement countries and sending them regular remittances, moved, like Nyakuoth's mother, to Nairobi or elsewhere.

When I arrived in Nuerland in December 2006, displaced Nuer were on the move, heading to towns and villages, looking for relatives, friends, land, livelihood opportunities and possibilities to create a 'home'. Buses transporting repatriates from the north, mainly Khartoum, were arriving daily in Rubkona and Ler. They carried beds, mattresses, fashionable clothing, household items and the legacy of years of absence and experiences of a different life. Convoys organised by the International Organization for Migration and the GoSS brought displaced Nuer from IDP camps in Khartoum, while UNHCR planes transported refugees from Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya. Others making their own arrangements were arriving by road, river and air.

The rapid changing landscape of Ler was also a sign of return of populations and a 'physical' emplacement process. With the changing image of the village, new *duëel* (houses) and *luaak* (cattle-byres) were appearing daily, the market was bustling, the bus station crowded and prayers were offered during Sunday services for the newly arrived. In June 2007, the local branch of the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC)[171] estimated that some 4,700 returnees were residing in Ler, two thirds of the total population. Most had come from Khartoum and other areas in Sudan and around 15% from Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya.

When Nyakuol and Kuok arrived in Ler, they first looked for their families. Most of Nyakuol's relatives were either dead or displaced to Khartoum. NyaPiny, the sister who

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camps to their area of origin. Return in dignity was implemented by providing returnees with basic assistance, including plastic sheeting, iron sheets, jerry cans, agricultural tools and seeds and equivalent to three months grain ration.

[171] During the conflict, SSRRC was the relief branch of SPLA in charge of coordination of international humanitarian assistance to war-torn communities in southern Sudan. Now, officially a branch of the GoSS, SRRC coordinates relief, rehabilitation and assistance to southern Sudanese and monitors returnees.

hosted her, was a widow. Her husband was killed during an attack on Ler in 2002 and she was taken by the Bul Nuer rebels to the north where was forced to become a 'wife' of one of the commanders. She finally managed to escape and came back to Ler in 2005. Nyakuol's brother, Bol, returned in 2005 from Khartoum after 15 years of displacement and settled in a village near Ler. NyaSunday, his seventeen-year old daughter had also been with Nyakuol in Kakuma. Bol had not seen his daughter in 12 years. The two of them had to learn anew how to be a 'family'. A few months after Nyakuol's arrival, her half-sister who had been displaced in Khartoum for 25 years arrived in Ler with her family.

Through this patchwork of returns from different directions, with diverse cultural baggage and with different experiences, the fragmented lives of Nuer households were being pieced together. A mother of a friend from Kakuma, Kim, stayed in Ler during the wars while her sons dispersed in different direction. She shared worries felt by many:

> I do not recognise my sons, they have changed. One went to Khartoum, and another to Kenya. Now, they do not talk and participate in family discussions. They are just quiet when we talk. Kim [who was in Kenya] goes out of the house and wants to spend time by himself, just staring into empty space. This is not what we [the Nuer] do. They [my sons] have different habits [from us] and I do not know how to relate to them. They feel like strangers to me.

For returnees, family (re)unification was often uncomfortable. Isaac, who had spent 20 years as a 'lost boy' in Ethiopia and Uganda told me: "*I prefer to spend time with my friends from Uganda, instead of my brothers. We have more in common, the life in Ethiopia* [military camps] *and in Uganda* [as refugees]. *My brothers stayed here and I do not know them and their lives.*" Similarly to other returnees, for example in Vietnam (Long 2004), my Nuer friends from Kakuma and others who were displaced to Uganda often talked about 'feeling strange' with families they barely knew after years of separation.

The complexities of return to southern Sudan were being recognised by repatriation organisations. The UNHCR Sudan repatriation evaluation report took a critical stand on the concept of 'reintegration' in southern Sudan noting that, "[it] does not fully capture the situation in question." The report stresses that throughout Sudan's independence the region has been a site of a regionalised civil conflict and that:

> […] ties of kinship and reciprocity interconnect those that stayed and those that left. In this context, reintegration is not 'reconstruction' in the sense of putting back together a condition that existed in the past; everything has changed. It is useful to see return and reintegration in South Sudan as part of a new and emerging situation (UNHCR 2008e: 11).

Indeed, emplacement was creating "a new and emerging situation." It was much of a creative ongoing process of constructing new space, reconciling cultural differences, and creating new 'home', often requiring adaptation, mutual understanding, (re)negotiation of norms and gender relations, and (re)production of social norms and relations. It was experienced first at the personal and second at the household/family level. Emplacement was also occurring in the context of a 'place', 'home', a site of 'return', which changed due to wars. Almost all research participants described *cieng nuära* (Nuer customs/village) as being in-flux.

3.2.Nuerland: Returnees' encounters

In Kakuma, Yak, a young married man from Bentiu, told me that "*when I think about Sudan, and my village, I remember rivers, forest, fields, fresh fish and cattle. It was very green, not like Kakuma that is like a desert. The life was good there, but this was before the wars. Now, I do not even know if I find my parents*." In Kakuma those recently arrived or those displaced as adults often reminisced about their 'lost home', bringing memories of land, landscapes, animals, activities, community and their past. However, these narratives were often filled with an uncertainty of what was awaiting them 'back home'. Nyakuol before leaving Kakuma expressed her fears:

> We, the widows, we recall what happened there and we think about it. …we think about Sudan and we have in our minds all the problems of going back for the widows. We are caught up between two worlds [Kakuma and Sudan] and none of them is good for us. Even now, people are talking about peace in Sudan, but we do not believe this.

Some women and men talked about the pain of witnessing brutal killings of relatives, and the flight and insecurity which changed idealised memories of 'home'. Others, especially young people born and brought up in camps, had little recollection, often basing their images of 'home' on an amalgam of stories heard from elders and new

meanings of 'home' being propagated by international organisations. 'Home' was emerging as a territorial locus of citizenship rights, freedom and stability.

When I asked about their first impressions of southern Sudan, returnees from Kakuma all expressed their surprise, often disappointment and, sometimes, sadness. Yak, who left his wife in Kakuma and went to Nuerland to complete their marriage, commented:

> When the plane landed in Rubkona [a twin town with Bentiu, the capital of Unity state], I was very surprised to see the place. It was so dusty, desert like, not what I remembered from before. There were also mosques everywhere, and *gallabas* [Arabs] trading in the market. This did not feel like home.

Others, like Wanten, a 'lost boy' displaced for over 20 years (see chapter 5), realised on arrival in Nuerland that 'home' no longer existed. Wanten felt 'lost' again: "*I could not go to my village, to my home. All my relatives were killed during the war and there was no more cieng* [home/village/clan]. *The village does not exist any longer. I decided to settle in town instead*." Kuok, after his 20 year-long absence could not remember much: "*I do not know this place. I have to first find some relatives, who will point me to my people. I do not recognise it; it has changed. It is also different from Juba, where I arrived first*."

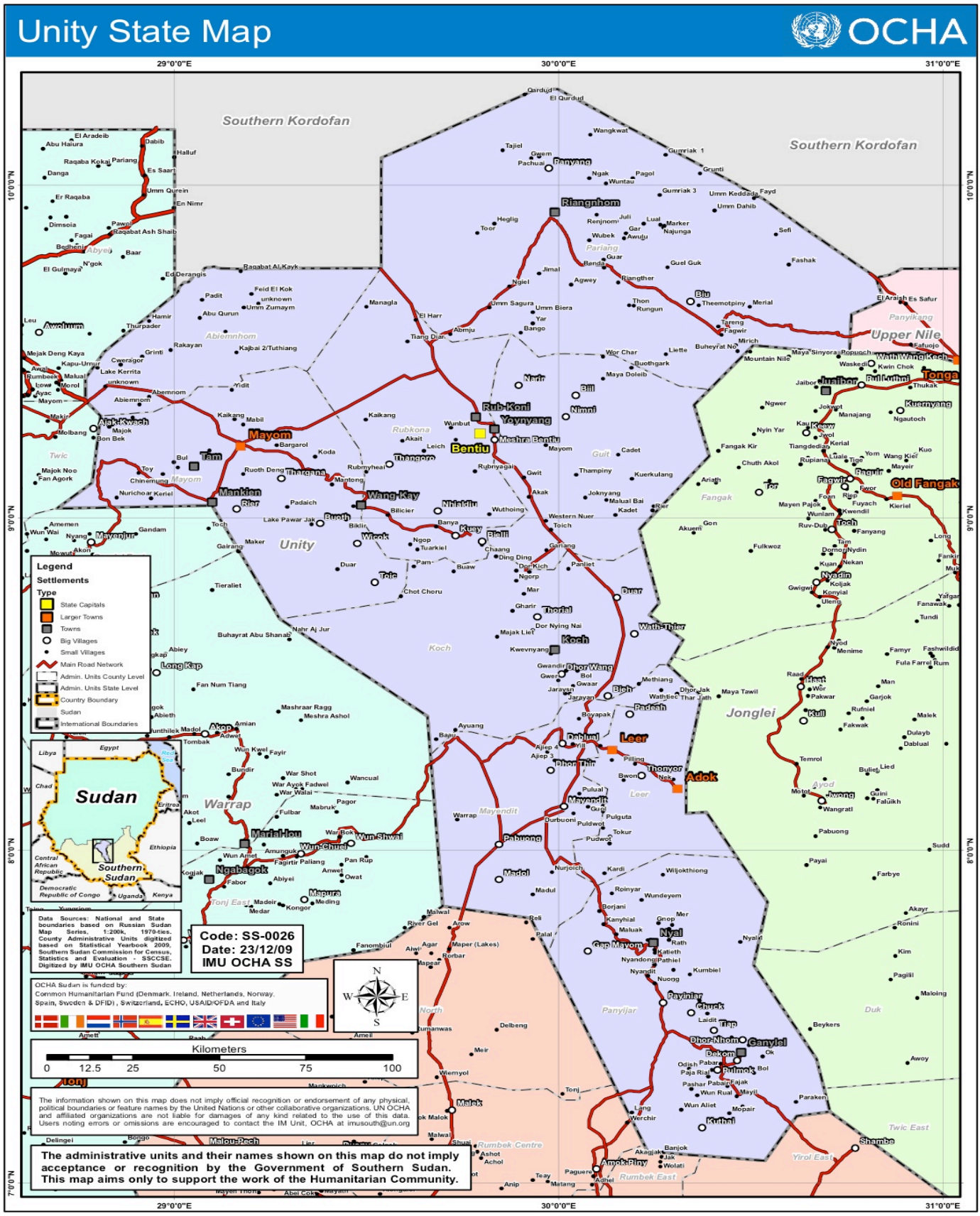
Juba, the capital of southern Sudan, was a busy place with its bustling circus of UN peacekeepers, four-wheel drives of humanitarian and development agencies, donor governments, Kenyan, Ugandan and Chinese businessmen and an increasing number of cars driven by southern Sudanese military, government officials and emerging local businessmen. In contrast, Western Upper Nile was much more remote and rural. Yet, its landscape, livelihoods and infrastructure have undergone significant changes during the wars. Bordering the northern part of Unity State, the main administrative unit of the Western Upper Nile region, has strong road and trade connections to the north, including Darfur and Khartoum. Due to its geographical proximity to the north and the presence of large oil reserves, the area had been dominated by northerners during the wars. Many northern traders established their businesses in the twin towns of Rubkona and Bentiu and spread further south to villages in the Dok[172] areas. Even Ler market

[172] Name of the main group of Western Nuer (see chapter 4).

had over a dozen stalls run by northerners trading spices, grain, household items and selling *fuul* (fried beans), fried fish and *qahwa* (coffee).

Due to its proximity to the north, easy road access and presence of northern troops, Rubkona was more dominated by Arab traders than Bentiu or Ler. While walking through the market one could see Arab men dressed in white *gallabiyas* (long white robes) and Arab women in *tobs* (full-body scarf-wraps). There were also numerous mosques whereas churches dominated Bentiu's landscape. For the many Nuer returnees with traumatic memories of war-time Arabisation and Islamisation, arrival in Rubkona was a shocking experience. Although the daily relations between the northerners and the Nuer were marked by mutual dependency, underlying tensions were constantly apparent. I witnessed numerous racist accidents, fights and exchanges of insults and heard of Nuer women reporting being raped by northern Sudanese soldiers.

The physical space of the Nuer changed dramatically as a result of war and arrival of 'modernity'. Major towns in the north of the region were now dominated by the northerners and Arab culture and physical space in Bentiu was being transformed by the emergence of government administrative structures, including the offices of the governor, state parliament and high court. Although GoSS administrative structures were being slowly set up in Western Upper Nile, the ongoing military presence was overwhelming. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) the northern forces – had a barracks in Rubkona near the UN compound in which I initially stayed after my arrival in Nuerland. Bentiu hosted a large contingent of SPLA forces. Throughout the Unity state, there were SAF and SPLA stations in different market villages along the road connecting Rubkona/Bentiu and Adok, a port on the Nile. The militarisation of the life in the state capital and throughout the region was visible by the presence of soldiers and guns. I witnessed the glorification of the military during a celebration of the first anniversary of the north-south peace agreement, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9, 2006. The Bentiu stadium was filled with military officials and local dignitaries who for hours watched a parade of Russian and Chinese made tanks, artillery, SAF and SPLA battalions and police units. They were followed by local chiefs, youth and women's groups and children dressed in military uniforms praising the war efforts and the nationalist propaganda.



Map 5. Unity State, Western Upper Nile region, southern Sudan.

Unlike Juba, the international humanitarian presence contributing to 'development' was limited in Western Upper Nile. The UN had a small compound based in Rubkona with representatives of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), IOM and UNICEF. Their work was limited to food distribution, reception of refugee and internally displaced returnees and information gathering. There were also a few NGOs, including Action Against Hunger – running livelihoods support programmes and feeding centres, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – in charge of clinics and a malnutrition feeding centre in Bentiu and Care International – supporting medical and agricultural self-sufficiency programmes. The military character of the capital was intensified by the presence of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) with a contingent of Indian peacekeepers.

Apart from the presence of the international organisations, the local Nuer were globally connected through the presence of international oil companies, including Chinese and Malaysian. The main road from Rubkona towards the north was peppered with vast oil fields around Heglig, while the road heading south towards Ler and Adok was dominated by large fenced off oil fields around Tharjath. With their own airstrips they were connected to the 'global space' through satellite, Internet, TV, mobile phones electricity and Chinese and western food. At the same time, the nearby Nuer had no access to running water, electricity or health services. Some young Nuer men were employed by oil companies as security guards or in other menial capacities. Their interactions and relations were marked by subjugation and exploitation, with the Nuer staff being paid cents while the oil companies were making billions.

During the wars (see chapters 4 and 5), oil companies, including the Canadian company Talisman, contributed to displacement from Western Upper Nile. In the post-war environment oil businesses were supposed to contribute to development. This mainly manifested itself in newly constructed roads, local government offices, schools and hospitals in Rubkona/Bentiu, Ler and other county capitals. Their presence had, however, also disastrous consequences for the daily life of the Nuer. During my stay, there were several floods in different parts of Nuerland, which destroyed Nuer hamlets, food storages and cattle. I accompanied Care International staff on a mission to the northern part of Unity State to assess the situation in some 34 villages, where

inhabitants had lost livestock and food supplies and were succumbing to spreading cholera and malaria. Many roads connecting the oil fields to distribution centres in the north were built without taking into account local ecological conditions. A chief from Padeh, a small village in Dok area, explained that most of the roads were cut through dykes and seasonal rivers, blocking the natural run-off during the rainy season and causing flooding. I heard complaints from villagers about the uncompensated clearing of Nuer lands by the oil companies and the fatal poisoning of children and cattle by chemical waste. Similar observations were reported by UNICEF and local NGOs.

Ler, the Adok county capital,[173] located some 100 km south, a three-hour drive from Bentiu, was far less urbanised and Arabised than Bentiu and Rubkona. The dirt road built by one of the Chinese oil companies links Bentiu through Ler while passing through the lush lands of Jagey and Dok people with scattered huts, cattle camps, occasional market villages and military outposts. Completely destroyed and burnt during the attacks of the Bul Nuer militia in 1998 and again in 2001, Ler had only a couple of remaining concrete structures, including the MSF-Holland hospital, a Presbyterian church and a primary school. Nyakuol upon her arrival was confused:

> When we finally arrived in Ler, I did not recognise the place, my home. I remembered that my sister lived around the airstrip [sandy landing place], but there used to be many huts, many people. Because of war and fighting, there are few people left, and all trees are gone. It took me a long time to find my sister's place.

Homesteads made out of mud and grass-thatched *duëel* (huts)[174] and occasional *luaak* (cattle byres) spread on both sides of the road and end at the river. The name of the county capital, Ler, comes from a *neem* tree introduced by Presbyterian missionaries in the early 20th century. The place had been densely vegetated, with trees offering welcome shelter from the midday sun. However, during the wars most *neem* and mango trees had been cut down by the soldiers.

Ler's centre was located around the main square, used as a football and parade ground. The commissioner's compound was located to the right of the road and the bus station. The old market had a few stalls, shacks selling *qahwa* and *fuul* and the dilapidated

[173] For the administrative structure of Western Upper Nile see chapter 1.
[174] Only a few houses – those of dignitaries, military commanders and prosperous traders – had zinc roofs.

building of the administrative headquarters. During my stay a Chinese oil company assisted the commissioner to start constructing a new brick-made headquarters.

Ler's southern limits were marked by the Ler primary school (which was being renovated through oil money by a Sudanese NGO), the auction place for cattle and the main market. The market was located in an area regularly flooded during the rainy season. From June till September, residents had to walk through deep mud to buy their supplies. The Ler market was not as busy as those of Rubkona and Bentiu, with fewer northern traders selling fewer goods for higher prices. During my 10 months in Ler (January-September 2007), I watched how the market was growing, with new stalls opening up to sell *fuul*, water pipes (*shisha*) and *qahwa*.

Those who did not leave during the wars commented how the place - how 'home'- had changed. Ruai, a young married man who had stayed in Ler throughout the conflicts, explained:

> When I look at the situation now, there is a great change in the Unity state [in Western Upper Nile]. There are roads, and there is food. People are not suffering from hunger. But Unity state was the state most destroyed during the war. We have oil so we are targeted by the government [the Khartoum government]. You see the oil fields, they were not here before. Oil companies took over our land.

The school, hospital, Presbyterian and Catholic churches, government and SPLA administrative offices and the Chinese oil trucks were the few signs of 'development' and 'modernity' in Ler. The road that was constructed during my stay – linking Rubkona/Bentiu through Ler with Adok, a port on the White Nile – opened up another connection. It allowed traders from Uganda and Kenya to transport their goods on barges from Juba to Adok and further northwards by mini-buses and trucks. One of the main concerns in Ler was the price of beer. Prior to the construction of the road it had to be expensively transported from the north but now came flooding in from Uganda and Kenya, reaping vast profits for local Nuer businessmen. From my house near the main square I often saw young boys transporting cases of Heineken on bicycles to the county headquarters and the military barracks. Road and beer were signs of development that many of the local politicians praised.

There were also other connections between the 'local' and the 'global' in Ler. As a hub of humanitarian operations during the wars with a small landing sand strip, Ler remained a base for a few international organisations – including the IRC, MSF-Holland, Save The Children and ACROSS. UNICEF, Care International and WFP ran occasional assistance programmes in Ler out of Rubkona.[175] Ler's landing ground was used by WFP, MSF and government planes to transfer food, supplies and international personnel. Their planes often had to make several passes to scare away children and cattle before they were able to land.

An older returnee Nuer man who was away from Ler for 30 years and came for a short visit expressed, like other returnees, surprise:

> War has changed the Nuer traditional values and customs in a negative way. Respect for the elderly has been eroded and rude and aggressive behaviours are entering the Nuer culture. In our country in the past, not even orphans and handicapped would beg for money on the street. Asking for money was only in the family – if you were a very close relative, others would ask you if you had enough. But asking for money on the street was considered as shameful. Now all are asking for money continuously, they especially asked the white people. It is the UN and the war which have ruined our culture in this way.

These views were also shared by those who had stayed behind. However, elder women and men often blamed militarised young men for the change in Nuer social norms. PanMadeng, an elder in the Presbyterian church who remained in Ler commented:

> [Due to their experiences in the bush], they [young men] became arrogant. They have guns and think that they do not have to respect others. This war has created many changes here. [Because of it], there is no more respect [*pöc*] between children and parents, the young and the old, women and men.

War and the presence of international aid organisations have weakened the social networks of support where families and clan members used to have an effective mechanism to cope with economic and environmental shock by sharing resources and assisting each other. Before the wars, the Nuer relied heavily on cultivation, fishing and cattle-herding. These agro-pastoralist livelihoods were coupled in the 1970s and 1980s with emerging trade and labour migration to the north. Although alternative food sources were becoming available in the emerging markets across Western Upper Nile,

[175] There were also some small local community based organisations and Sudanese run NGOs.

the penetration of the state and trade were rather limited (see chapter 4; Hutchinson 1996). Cultivation, fishing and hunting made communities generally self-sufficient. Famines caused by wars and droughts and subsequent international aid created considerable dependency on free food distribution which in turn contributed to changes in livelihood and social support networks. The continuous supply of WFP food aid in the post-war period further deepened reliance on food and undermined self-sufficiency. Although some people started going back to cultivation, there were also those who preferred to collect or buy food rather than grow it.

The landscapes, infrastructure and livelihoods of those who did not move had undergone changes due to wars, oil exploration, the opening up of Western Upper Nile to the rest of the region and increased commercial and trading networks. While returnees have changed, so had stayees and their 'homes'.

3.3. "*We cannot be the same Nuer as our parents*": Irreversibility of displacement, home and being in-flux

Dau, an educated Dinka man in his early forties from the Nuer-inhabited areas of Western Upper Nile fled to Khartoum in 1983 and through contacts with Catholic missionaries gained a university education. After his 'return' 20 years later to his place of birth, he was perplexed:

> Our families are not used to this [village] life and this culture anymore. We, the ones who are in our forties now, are the generation which is in-between our culture and the modern life. [Due to war] we have gone to towns and are living the life of towns, whereas our fathers are still living the traditional Dinka culture back in their villages. […]
>
> I am in fact very confused whether what we are doing is right. I am not sure whether the culture of town and of modern life that we have adopted and have taught our children is the right culture. Yes, we are going through so-called development, but this means we are going away from what our grandfathers used to do and how they used to live their lives. When I go to visit my parents, for me it is difficult to accept some of their traditional cultures, for example slaughtering of animals and believing in different gods. […]
>
> Also, there are certain things that I do that they cannot understand and they see me more as a foreigner. I come from there and I belong to that land, but my life has been very different and I live my life differently. They do not know how I live my life and they see that I am different now. I am Dinka from Pariang, but I am also a foreigner in my fathers' land. For my children it is even more difficult because

> they are so far away culturally from that life. They do not know anything about the Dinka traditions and they will not be able to relate to that life. I feel that our Dinka [and Nuer] culture is being lost.
>
> We are going through very abrupt changes now. The war, displacement, oil, the coming of Christianity and the fact that people have gone to different places and now are coming back with different cultures means that our traditional Dinka [and Nuer] cultures are going through a change. Many of the cultures have already changed, and the change now is much more abrupt. It is accelerated. I feel that the real culture will die with our fathers. Because once they are not here, we those who have gone through a transition already will not be able to maintain the Dinka [Nuer] culture.
>
> Yes, we still marry with cows and the cows are still important for us. But the meaning of money is also changing now. Also, the way we want to live our lives is different now. We want things, we have broader views on life, we have access to information, we have seen many places. We cannot be the same Dinka [or Nuer] as our parents.

Dau's narrative suggests some of the returnee dilemmas of being 'in-flux' between 'the old' and the 'new', the 'culture of grandfathers' and 'modernity'. He points out to the intergenerational difference in experience of war, displacement and return. Another important realisation is that not only have those who moved changed due to their exposure to other cultures, education, 'modern' life in a town and through conversions to Christianity. The coming of development and modernity 'at home', as Dau points out, threatens the 'culture' of the grandfathers, i.e. social and cultural customs that have distinguished Dinka, or Nuer, from other groups. Thus, the rift between those who had moved and those who had stayed behind, the younger and the older becomes more profound.

The coming together of Nyakuol and her dispersed family members demonstrates other dilemmas of households fragmented by war. Nyakuol's niece, NyaSunday, who was with her in Kakuma and finished seven grades of primary school found it difficult to communicate with her father, Bol, after 'return'. For 15 years Bol had been in Khartoum without any contact with his daughter. When they started living together in a village nearby Ler in 2007, NyaSunday was often frustrated:

> These people do not understand that we, the ones who were in Kakuma, are different. My father insists that I get married because he is in need of cattle. But I want to continue with my education, I am not a cattle-camp *nyal nuära* [Nuer girl]. I have changed, I am modern town girl and I want to finish my school before I get married. Our lives were too different during these years. We do not understand each other.

Kuok often complained about his family members who had stayed behind in Ler during war:

> I do not understand these people here and they do not understand me. When I wash my clothes or want to cook for myself, they tell me that I am doing woman's work. I saw one of my cousins beating his wife. When I advised him not to do it, he now is upset with me and does not want to talk to me. When I come to his house, he says: "just talk to my wife." In Kakuma, we have learned the goodness of education and that women and men are equal. But here, the people are still [behind]. They treat women as their property.
>
> Also, if you did not take part in the [military] struggle, you are seen [by those who stayed behind] as a coward. People say that you are arrogant [because of] education and they do not consider you. Only those who were in the military get jobs now. The power of the gun is more than the power of the pen. You can be a *kuäar* [leader/chief] if you have military rank. People [who had stayed behind] have changed.

These experiences and narratives show that displacement as a process is irreversible and 'home' is not static. The irreversibility of displacement and its impact on social relations, and gender relations in particular, were discussed by women and men seeking to reconcile 'old' modes of livelihoods with 'new' ways learned in the places of displacement. For those who were displaced as children and grew up in refugee camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and elsewhere, going to southern Sudan was part of their ongoing migratory trajectory. They experienced and adapted to life in different practices marked often by changes in gender identities and ideologies (see chapter 6). Moving to Nuerland was filled with anxiety. Although they were supposedly 'coming home', southern Sudan was a place that they barely remembered, let alone were they familiar with its lifestyles. For them it required learning the place anew, an issue to which I return in chapter 8.

Thus, the idea of refugee return has to be qualified and considered in relation to those who had stayed behind. In the context of displacement, often multiple displacements to multiple and diverse destinations, the individual experiences are different, and there are barriers for people to share these experiences. For example, there were substantial differences in cultural, societal and educational upbringing and war-time experiences between those who had stayed behind or fled to Khartoum and those who had migrated to East Africa. One of them was language. I witnessed this at a meeting with the director of social development in Bentiu. In a room crowded with his staff, visitors and

women serving tea, our conversation was simultaneously translated into four languages. The director, Dinka educated in Arabic, neither spoke English nor Nuer. His assistant, a returnee from Uganda, spoke English, Nuer and some Dinka. My translator, a returnee from Kakuma, spoke Nuer and English. The discussion went on for a long time, as it needed to be translated for all to be able to understand each other.

Dress was another visible point of difference between those who had stayed behind and those who had gone to East Africa. The former were more conservatively attired, often influenced by Arab fashions, while men who had been away often wore rapper type clothes and girls short skirts and tight trousers and blouses. Returnees from East Africa were perceived as being less respectful towards elders but at the same time having more awareness of rights and position of women and girls. Those from East Africa had more open relations with girls and socialised with them in public. Young returnee men from Kakuma complained about feeling discriminated against, looked down on by the government and 'stayees'. Kuok and his friends talked about the challenges of findings jobs in government offices and institutions (including schools), as they felt that those who were educated in Arabic in Khartoum or had stayed behind and took part in the military struggle were favoured by the Khartoum-educated and military-dominated administration in Bentiu.

Kuok told me that "*when you come back home you have to adapt, because otherwise you will be seen as a stranger, as a foreigner*." Feeling different and often estranged from their family members who had stayed behind or were displaced to Khartoum, Kakuma returnees often complained about their loneliness. They felt foreigners in the land of their grandfathers and grandmothers. An educated middle-aged Nuer man working for an international NGO in Ler explained succinctly:

> There is a problem with the integration of these people [returnees]. They come back but nobody knows them. They are not given jobs with the government because they are not known and their behaviours is not known. The community has to assess them first, they have to know what is in their minds and what they will be teaching the people here. Also, their behaviour is completely different from those who stayed here. […] They have changed and their culture is different from the Nuer culture. When you come back here you should do like the other people are doing: if they are cultivating the land you should cultivate the land, if they are building the house, you should build the house. Do not be different from them.

A married male returning from 15 years in Khartoum found a way of coping with 'return': "*When you come home, it does not matter whether you are educated or not, you cannot go against the culture. When you come home, you are Nuer and you have to act as Nuer*." 'Acting like a Nuer' involved an adaptation process especially for those who had been displaced for most of their lives. In a conversation with educated male returnees in their mid-thirties who had come back from Khartoum after two decades of displacement, they discussed the process of adaptation. For them, it was a two-way process – where the adaptation happens from both sides: returnees' and stayees'. "*The two sides have to learn how to live together*," succinctly summarised Dak. As these narratives reveal 'return home' and subsequent 'emplacement' are rarely to an empty place. The negotiation and (re)integration process, an integral part of settling-n (*nyiuuri piny*), involved points of tension and cultural clashes between those who were exposed to different cultures during their displacement and those who had stayed in the area and witnessed war.

Forced displacement is an extreme event and disjunction. The social change that might accompany such a disruption, however, emerges as a process that is fragmented, happening at different points and in different arenas, not always simultaneously. As the experiences of war and displacement show, change has not only taken place in sites and social arenas among those who had moved but also among those who had stayed behind; it happened 'at home'. As a process, it is made up of myriad of things and events, sometimes contradictory, as different sections of population, including members of the same households, have gone through different experiences during the wars. 'Homecoming' is a way of experiencing fragmented (family and community) lives put together. Change may be resisted, and at the same time, there will be different changes at different places.

4. IMAGINED AND LIVED 'HOMES' AND RETURN: GENDERED EMPLACEMENT, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LAND

4.1. *Cieng* as home, as village

Of particular interest for my analysis is the depiction of 'home' since '*wane cieng'* (let's go home/to the village) was one of the most common references that Nuer made to their movement from refugee camps to Nuerland. In anthropological discourse, the

concept of 'home' has been defined as a place where people live, a physical place, to which they return either permanently or for visits, or a place which they dream to return to but are often unable to as a result of the prevailing conditions that forced them to leave in the first place. In western conceptualisations, geographers have referred to 'home' as the 'exemplar of place' (Rose 1993: 53 quoted in de Alwis 2004: 215) and the 'territorial core' (Porteous 1976). Tuan (1977) on the other hand attributes to home the characteristics of intimacy and well-being. Others have personalised home by adding themselves to this notion (Bachelard 1969 and Cooper 1974). In western depiction, 'home' emerges as a gendered feminised place (Rose 1993). Construction of 'home' as a women's place resulted in both 'place' in general and 'home' in particular being produced as sites of nurture, stability, reliability and authenticity (Rose 1993; Massey 1994). As Giles puts it, "the idea of home is a contradictory phenomenon: while it may confine women, it may also represent escape and freedom. For some it is a locus of resistance and struggle" (1999: 85). In recent years, with much focus on global displacement and migration, challenges of homecomings have been the focus of many discussions. Many of these reflections have been produced by authors who themselves experienced displacement, including Edward Said (1999).

For the Nuer women and men, the meaning of 'home' is strongly interlinked with social relations and land. There are two distinct words, *cieng* and *duël*, that generally refer to 'home'. The word *cieng,* as Evans-Pritchard tells us:

> […] has the general sense of 'home', [and] may be employed to describe a residential group of any size, from single homestead to large tribal division. It is usually coupled with the name of a lineage when it refers to local groups of any size (1951: 3).

Cieng, therefore, refers to a village, a community, "a corporate group with a feeling of solidarity" characterised by strong kin and clan ties (Evans-Pritchard 1951: 1). *Cieng* is also linked to land and the right to land. Land is usually passed through inheritance from father to son while women acquire a right to land through their husbands.

The second word used to describe a 'home', *duël* or *dhor,* generally means a grass thatched mud hut – a residence of household members. The English word 'home' – associated with the division between domestic and private as opposed to public and

communal spheres and domesticity and femininity – does not have the same meanings in Nuer. Like other pastoralist communities (see Massai studied by Hodgson 2004 or Endo in Kenya studied by H. Moore 1996), for the Nuer women and men, the distinction between private and public does not take place within a 'home' sphere. As the research participants often pointed out, *duël* as a residence of a household is neither a private nor a personal place. It is rather a place where the daily activities of the household members take place, involving cooperation and conflict between men and women, and children, with specifically designated social obligations and rights, related to social position within the household and the community. It is also a place of meetings, production and reproduction, open to visitors, where family and community issues are discussed.

Continuesly, the Nuer women and men referred to their strong attachment and sense of belonging to a specific *cieng*. In the 1930s, Evans-Pritchard commented that the Nuer women and men "have a great affection for their homes and, in spite of their wandering habits (moving with the cattle during dry season for grazing or migrating for trade), men born and bred in a village are likely to return to it even if they live elsewhere for some years" (1951: 1). Although this interpretation was based on a spefici ethnographic position of Evans-Pritchard, similar sense of 'home' was shared by my respondents. For example, Paul, who spent seven years in Kakuma, expressed his strong attachment to 'home':

> When I think of home I remember *cieng* is where you belong to. You have lost your grand-grandparents, your grandfather and your grandmother, you have left your parents there. Also you have a freedom, you have a responsibility and right. You are free to cut a tree and no one is going to accuse you that you are destroying the environment. But here in Kakuma, you cannot cut this tree. Soon you will be jailed. You have no freedom here. […]You have responsibility for everything at home. I cannot term Kakuma as home but it is a temporary home.

Other research has identified the cultural trauma associated with recent displacement, pointing to the deep attachment to place that many agro-pastoralists people, and women in particular feel, and the shame that accompanies the compulsion to move: "To a Dinka [and a Nuer], his {sic} country with all of its deprivations and troubles is the best in the world. Until recently going to foreign lands was not only rarity, but a shame" (Deng, cited in Abusharaf 2002:54). Similarly for the Nuer women and men, as

I show below, the connection to 'home' remained an important one, even if they did not decide to settle permanently in their 'village'. *Cieng*, however, became also reinterpreted through a practice of (re)establishing social connections. As some were unable or unwilling to find their relatives, they decided to establish new kinds of fictive kin ties that replaced *cieng* based on *maar* (kinship) (see below).

The rest of this chapter demonstrates how due to changing circumstances resulting from wars and years of displacement to diverse places, the Nuer women and men come to define a *cieng* not only with a geographical location and ancestors, but rather as a conceptual and physical space where social, economic and political activities intersect (see Hammond 2004: 10). While some settled in familiar places where they once lived or where they left their relatives and resources behind, others undertook 'homemaking' projects in unfamiliar places. Both groups, however, underwent process of creating rather than re-constructing a sense of identity and community in dialectical relations and practices with each other, those who were displaced and those who stayed behind. These ties included (re)establishing relations with long-lost relatives, (re)casting relations with distant kin as well as creating new fictive kin relations based on common experiences during displacement rather than only on blood. As with Russians 'returning' to the Russian 'motherland' from ex-Soviet republics, this 'homecoming' and 'place-making' required "both physical and cultural reconstruction by migrants upon return" (Pilkington and Flynn 1999: 196).

4.2. Imagined 'homes' and 'real homes': land, rights and the state

Sarah, an elderly woman who had been in Kakuma since 1992, associated home with a good life, memories of friends and family and her duties in the house:

> When we think about *cieng* (home), we think about home. Not about Kakuma. We think about the place where we were born. I think about my own home, not the whole Sudan, my home in Bentiu. Things there were very good for me. All the lives for young and old people are good. We think about how we decorated our houses, how we smear them, and the food that the husband brought from the river.

The Nuer women and men, young and old in Kakuma referred to *cieng* (home) as having a territorial dimension, a place linked to specific environmental, landscape and livelihood characteristics as well as a place of birth and belonging. Similarly to images

of home in other exiles' narratives (see Said 1999; Giles 1999; Janzen 2004; Basu 2007), 'home' and 'homeland are idealised to cope with the suffering they experience in displacement. Nuer women and men referred to images of green fields, cattle, rivers and fish and the idyllic village life. While Kakuma, as other refugee camps, was perceived as a 'temporary place', (southern) Sudan was seen as a 'permanent place', which was expressed by one of the Sudanese politicians visiting the camp: "*Camp is not a permanent place, when you get home you will build a place that is permanent. All of you will have a piece of land of your own. You can secure a place in one of the towns*." This narrative demonstrates the importance of land ownership, vital in order to create a 'permanent' place, even if it involves mobile locations for pastoralist communities.

Decision to 'return home' was thus influenced by possibility of accessing land and resources. They were some of the first elements of the settling-in. Nyakuol before her departure told me:

> The biggest problem is that women in Nuer cannot own land. As a single woman without any assistance it is not easy to cultivate the land. Another problem is that if you are a widow and you are rich, others can come and take away your land and your property. The relatives of the husband could come and take away everything, cows, the grains that you have.

In the narratives of Nuer refugees in Kakuma, 'home' does not only take imaginative and social relations forms but is also linked to territory. Refugees in Kakuma often talked about Sudan as their 'homeland' and 'country'. The idea of home was strongly intertwined with land and access to rights and freedoms. The construction of Sudan as a 'national homeland' started already during the war (see chapter 6), and was further propagated by international organisations and Sudanese politicians in Kakuma. Slogans of 'Sudan is home' printed on t-shirts worn by NGO and refugee staff in the camp in addition to NGO civic education programmes for returnees formulated and strengthened the idea of 'being Sudanese'. This was visible in the expanding notions of personal identity of the Nuer and other Sudanese. A widow commented: "*I am Dok, this is where I was born and this is where I was married. But I am a Nuer, and I am also a Sudanese. Sudan is my home*." As mentioned in chapter 6, the common duty to rebuild the country was stressed in nationalistic discourse by Sudanese politicians

visiting the camp. They also emphasised the need for the southern Sudanese to return in order to gain control over politics in Sudan: "*Let us be the majority at home. The Northerners are still the majority in the South. You need to come back to make Sudan our place.*"

The nationalistic discourse of the need of southerners to return to Sudan was linked to the CPA's provision for a 2011 referendum to determine whether southern Sudan should remain with Sudan or become independent. The GoSS was running campaigns in refugee and IDP camps to encourage southerners to go back as they wanted to secure a majority of the vote. Associating *cieng* with a country entails expansion in the Nuer view of the world and their place in the greater context of social and kinship/ethnic relations. *Cieng* no longer meant a single 'clan'/community and household. It became associated with a greater community of diverse ethnic groups linked to each other by virtue of shared borders, shared identity and common suffering at the hands of northern Sudanese, the 'Arabs'.

The nationalistic vision of home as homeland and (southern) Sudan was linked to the duties and expectations of returning refugees and had strong masculine undertones. The young men were expected to contribute to the development and (re)building of Sudan through sharing their skills and resources that they had gained during life in exile. These convictions were often expressed by the young men in Kakuma and in Nuerland (see chapter 8). For them, 'homemaking' meant state-creation and nation building and a larger development of infrastructure and services in southern Sudan, including provision of education, medical services and defending the country against its enemies. Women's role was expressed in the gendered views similar to those found in other war-torn societies entangled in the gendered visions and rhetoric of the nation (see Korac 1996; Yuval Davis 1997). During a campaign meeting organised by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Ler, the local secretary general referred to women as "mothers of the nation" and praised their role in supporting men, bringing up children and building the 'domestic' sphere of southern Sudan. Hence, women became "bearers" of the collective identity and duty to give birth to the nation (Yuval Davis 1997).

4.3. *Nyuuri piny* (settling-in) and gendered access to land

'Imagined homes' took on a lived meaning through the experience and practice of settling-in (*nyuuri piny*) after 'return'. When my neighbour Nyabol, a married woman in her forties, came back to Ler in December 2006 after 10 years in Khartoum, she found her son whom she had not seen since he left Khartoum for Ethiopia and then Kakuma in 1998:

> When I came, I settled at my sister's house. My husband was with another wife in the village, and since I have been living in town for a long time, I could not imagine going back to the village. I decided to settle in Ler, which is more of a 'town' than *cieng nuära* (Nuer village). My sister who was living in Ler helped me out. She accommodated me, gave me food and welcomed me. In Nuer tradition, anybody can help you even a person who is not related to you. No one can reject a visitor, *jäal*, and this is how we, the returnees, are called here.
>
> It is very difficult for me to settle here. First I need to get land and then a house. Once I will be sitting with all my things in my *duël* [house], I can say that I *nyuuri piny ke ciengda* [I am settled in my home/community/village]. When I have my property, people will then recognise me: '*Eno cieng Nyabol* [This is the home of Nyabol]'. For now, I am still a *jäal* [visitor], staying with my sister, and not many people know me here. I feel like a stranger and they call me '*khartoumi*'. Once I have my own land and house, I will stop being a returnee. I will be *raan Ler* [citizen of Ler]. But this takes time.

Nuer hospitality[176] was an important social support for the initial settling-in of returnees. Although often creating burdens for relatives who had stayed behind, those who found relatives had an easier time making a new start. Nuer returnee women and men in Ler quickly realised that 'homecoming' and settling-in (*nyuuri piny*) is a long-term process, with gradual establishing oneself in a place, acquiring land, building a *duël* and creating a space in the community. Some decided to settle in a place different from their previous place of origin or birth, mostly in urban areas or market centres, a result of lifestyle changes during displacement and in order to better access paid employment. Those coming from Khartoum, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia mostly settled in Bentiu, Rubkona, Ler or other market centres. Access to land was on the mind of almost all returnees.

'Homecoming' could not be complete without a ceremony of animal sacrifice. As Hutchinson (1996) shows, until the 1990s Nuer lifestyles and identity remained

[176] See Hutchinson (1996: 161-162) for discussion of Nuer unconditional hospitality.

intertwined with cattle and the meaning of cattle remains inscribed in many ceremonies, including homecoming. All returnee men and women whom I met in Nuerland had to undergo the ceremony of homecoming. This was supposed to be performed by the immediate family and clan members instantly upon the 'homecoming' of the displaced relatives. However, as in some cases, returning women and men were not able to find their immediate relatives, they either resorted to more distant family members or were welcomed by the government officials. In some cases, it took months or even years before the ceremony was carried out. According to the returning Nuer women and men, the importance of the ceremony was rather for those who had stated behind than for the returnees themselves. When Nyabol and her son, Liep, arrived in Ler, they invited me to their ceremony. The husband of Nyabol slaughtered a bull and the long-lost son, Liep, jumped over the dead body of the animal.[177] In order to leave behind the misfortunes they had suffered while away they had to wash themselves with the blood of the bull. Only by doing so can a person be considered by the relatives who had stayed behind to have fully 'come home'. Yet, for the returnees, the process of 'homecoming' was much longer and entailed several other elements of settling-in: "*Entedi, han a cieng*. *But this is for my relatives. For me I still need to settle in; there are many things I need to do: I need a house, I need a job, I need to marry,*"[178] Liep told me. Those who had spent decades in refugee camps in East Africa, many of whom had converted to Christianity, rejected the ritual, arguing that their new faith did not allow pagan rites. This often led to conflicts with those who had stayed behind. "*Look at these jäal* [guests/visitors], *they have become people of the town* [*rek*], *they have lost our culture*," lamented some of the elder women and men. In some cases, I was invited instead to church prayers organised to welcome returnees, yet usually an animal sacrifice followed.

To better understand the experiences of returnees, I decided to carry out a small-scale qualitative survey on socio-economic experiences of settling-in of returnees. In July and August 2007, after seven months in Ler, I interviewed 30 returnee women and men (20 returnees from Kakuma and ten from Khartoum) in order to verify general patterns of experiences of settling-in previously detected in life stories and individual

[177] In some cases, families too poor to afford a bull slaughtered a goat. Local authorities welcomed returnee convoys with the same ceremony.
[178] "Now, I am home".

conversations. My aim was not to carry out a broad statistical analysis, but rather to gain a more in-depth understanding of the priorities and phases of the emplacement experience.

Bringing the separated household members back together was the most important aspect of settling-in expressed by all of my respondents. A young man who had spent 20 years away, first in Ethiopia and then in Uganda, explained:

> This is my home. This is where I belong, but I also have to bring all my family home. When they are all home, this is when we can say we have come home. For now, we are scattered. But I am also keeping my house in Uganda. I spent there many years and this is where my friends are from. I will keep my house there just in case something happens in Sudan.

In a society based on strong communal and kinship (*maar*) ties, the Nuer live closely in family and rely on kin relations in their everyday life (Evans-Pritchard 1941; Hutchinson 1996). Women and men often told me: "*We the Nuer, we do not like to stay by ourselves. This is when we are lonely. We have to be with our family and relatives. This is when ci locde te* [our hearts are happy]." Thus, bringing household members together was a priority for many returnees. During the first weeks and months after arrival in Nuerland, most of the Kakuma and other returnees sought to find their relatives and re-establish their social networks. Those who were unable to find immediate family and kin members as they might have perished or disappeared during the conflict, they relied on more distant kin relations. Kuok, my research assistant, upon his arrival in Nuerland did not find his direct relatives:

> My parents were long dead and my siblings were either dead or scattered around. I had no choice but look for my uncles who lived in a different part of Unity state. They are not my real uncles, meaning brothers of my father or my mother, but I call them this way. Some of them were the cousins of my parents and some neighbours. At least, there was some connection [between me and them] even if not immediate blood. This is how you can create your *cieng*, also this will be useful when I have to marry. I have to have a *cieng* [community/home] to be able to marry.

(Re)casting old kin ties or (re)creating ties with distant family and kin members became a necessity for some returnees. They could at times rely on the hospitality of their distant family members which enabled them to start settling-in process. (Re)creating a *cieng* even in the absence of immediate kin members was an important

process of emplacement. The forging of community bonds was a pivotal step in establishing one-self as well as being able to create own household through marriage (see chapter 8).

Some returnee women and men, however, decided to create new community bonds rather than (re)create previous *maar* relations. When Nyakuol was searching for a place to build a house, she specifically looked for a piece of land that was in vicinity of other friends from Kakuma:

> These people here [who had stayed behind or went to Khartoum] call us *nei ti ti* Kakuma [Kakuma people]. I decided to settle close to my friends from Kenya because they know me better than my relatives who I had not seen in decades. We went [together] through many things in Kakuma and we can assist each other better. Our families [who had stayed behind] do not understand us. They went through different experiences. They think we have a lot of money and things because we were in Kenya. They do not know how hard it is to be a foreigner in some else's land. I feel closer to Nyakwong and Nyajung, the other widows from Kakuma, because we have lived there together.

Relying on previous relationships from Kakuma, or Ethiopia, proved to be an important source of support and community building among the returnees. Several of the elderly women from Kakuma upon their return to Ler relied on contacts with Tito, a middle-age medical assistant who previously had worked in Kakuma and was now employed in the MSF-hospital. Based on their friendship and precious shared experiences of displacement with Titi, NyaChakuoth, Nyapiny and NyaTap were able to find employment as cleaners in the hospital. These relations went beyond financial and emotional support. They often lead to creating fictive kinship ties which were necessary for creating new households. In 2005, Gatbel, a young man in his late 20s who was resettled with his wife Angela to Canada from Kakuma. Gatbel was one of the 'lost boys' and in Kakuma, he lived together with other boys in a household run by Nyatap. NyaTap was a middle-aged woman who was unable to have children. She went first with her husband who was a soldier to Ethiopia in 1990 and then moved to Kakuma. Her husband was killed in the war and NyaTap stayed by herself in the camp. She decided to take care of at that time a group of fifteen young 'lost boys' and became their 'mother'. Despite any direct *maar* (kinship) relationship, Gatbel treated her as his real mother. When he came to Ler in 2007 for a visit to finalise the marriage process to Angela, he asked NyaTap to represent him at the marriage negotiations. "*I will even*

have to give a cow; these 'lost boys' are my real children, " NyaTap told me. As a mother of the groom, she had to contribute to the bridewealth payment. Several other returnee young men relied on their previous Ethiopia and Kakuma friends and companions to establish new fictive kinship ties. Hence, the meaning of *cieng* as a "corporate group with a feeling of solidarity" (Evans-Pritchard 151: 1) was being (re)interpreted to include new relations based on shared experiences rather than only blood.

The meaning of community was also being (re)created by the returnees. As a result, within Ler and Nuer Dok *ciengs*, new "*Kakumis*" and "*Khartoumis*" communities were emerging. This was visible in the language used by the officials in Ler. At a meeting organised by the local commissioner's office to discuss land attributions for the returnees, the administrators asked returnees to sit in groups according to their places of displacement. When I arrived to the meeting, my Kakuma friends waved to me and shouted: "*NyaPiliny, come here. Nei ti ti Kakuma jene thin* [the Kakuma people are here]! *You are our sister, you are with us*." The new 'sister-' and 'brotherhood' based on the place of previous displacement was becoming a new kinship mark for the returning populations. Establishing oneself within Ler was marked by (re)creating links and relations with family and clan members and/or forging fictive kinship ties based on war-time experiences.

Access to land and building a house were the second most important factors in *nyuuri piny* (settling-in) followed by access to jobs and livelihoods. However, the experiences of accessing resources varied by gender, marital status and age. Nyajung, a mother in her thirties with six children married to an influential politician in the area had spent seven years in Kakuma. Upon her return to Ler, it was relatively easy for her to establish herself, as her husband had a high government position in Bentiu and her family who had stayed behind kept land and resources intact:

> I got the land waiting for me and my husband gave me money to construct a house. I can now welcome visitors in the house. People in the community now know me and they come to visit me. I am integrated, because I can now exchange with others. I give and they can give.

Women whose husbands had stayed behind or came back to Nuerland earlier were able to access land much more readily. In the Nuer custom, land is owned and inherited by men and women acquire temporary use rights based on their affiliation with male relatives. Unmarried girls and young women gain access to land through their fathers, while married women settle on the land of the husbands. However, the situation was more problematic for widows. Although, in principle, widows were entitled to the land of their deceased husbands, due to loss of property, appropriation of the land (in towns and market centres) by the government and general impoverishment of households during the wars, it was at times difficult for widows to execute their use rights. A female chief in Ler recounted numerous stories of returnee widows being chased away from their husbands' land by the family members. These cases, however, rarely reached the local courts, as women's (formal) rights to hold land were limited by customary practice.

With the encroaching of *cieng kume* [government laws] into Nuer areas, the GoSS interim constitution stipulated that everyone, regardless of gender and age, has a right to own land (Interim Constitution 2005: part two, part 12). Although this is a southern Sudan-wide law, its application at the community level, especially in villages is not clear. Ler was considered a town, a capital of the Adok county, and the land was owned by the government and hence, *cieng kume* (government law) applied. There were several land surveys carried out by the local government to delimit plots and divide them among communities who had to pay for them. Those who had previously owned land in Ler were given priority. A parcel of 500m2 cost about US$100. Only part of the land in Ler was surveyed in 2006 and the land was mostly sold to those resident in Ler at that time. Those who came after 2006 were unable to acquire land title and had to wait for another survey. In June 2007, the Ler county land commission parcelled land outside Ler into 50 plots and announced they would be sold to returnees. However, more than 300 returnee households from Khartoum arrived in April-June 2007 and were awaiting land. Kakuma returnees who were estimated at some 250 households were not even considered.

Gender played a role in gaining access to land. Thudan, who was away for 17 years, displaced as a boy first to Ethiopia and then to Kenya, came back in 2005. Obtaining a good position with an NGO but not originally from Ler, he wanted to buy land to settle:

> It is easy to settle for young men. When you come by yourself, and you find your relatives, they will give you land. I got my land and my share of cattle in the home village in Nyal. But here, in Ler, I am new. I do not know anyone and I have to wait for survey to get a permanent home. For young men who come with education and get good jobs, it is easier to get settled. They can get a job and buy land. The most difficult it is for widows, because they have to rely on themselves and they have to provide for the whole family. For them, according to *cieng nuära* [Nuer culture/laws] it is not easy to get access to land. They have to beg from their male relatives.

Most survey respondents, both women and men, shared Thudan's views on the difficulties of settling-in and gaining access to land for widows. Some of the widows complained about not being able to settle permanently. "*We are considered as returnees here, we do not have a permanent home. Instead we have to keep moving from one place to another. We do not have our place, our home*," lamented Nyakuol's sister who returned from Khartoum. Nyakuol was in a similar situation. It took her five months to construct a temporary shelter. She was first accommodated by her sister, and later received a small plot from her brother for a temporary house. In June 2007, Nyakuol moved in with her four children. She constructed a hut and a small kitchen, and was in the process of digging a latrine. She also decided to cultivate a small garden. "*Now, I feel that I have a home, it is still not permanent, but I am at least with my children under one roof and people can come to visit me. I am starting to settle-in*," she told me. The ability to host and extend assistance to others were important signs of being part of community. To be emplaced was to be able to reciprocate others' hospitality and share in the daily practice of social relations that define a *cieng*, a community and oneself within it.

Among the returnees whom I knew in Ler, those who came from Khartoum and from Kakuma, there were only a few who managed to settle permanently and acquired land title during my stay there. Among the survey respondents, only two men had acquired land title. The majority built temporary shelters on non-surveyed land, often rented from relatives, and expressed their feeling of being unsettled. Another 'lost boy', Gatleak, who returned from Kakuma after 20 years away, complained:

> When you come to Ler, and you do not find your relatives, you are really struggling. It is difficult to settle, because especially for the returnees from Kakuma we are coming with nothing. We have left the place a long time, our relatives are often dead, all cows and property were lost during the wars. We are citizens of Sudan, but our

> government is not here to assist us. If you do not have good contacts and you are not known in the community, you will be struggling. It takes along time to settle, to get land, to get a job, and to have a place.

When he came back from Kakuma, he learned that his family was dead and all their property lost. He found Nyakuol whom he knew from Kakuma and she helped him during the first months. He commented: "*These people of Sudan here they do not know you; we only know those who were with us in Kakuma. We help each other, because otherwise it is impossible to survive here.*" Social and support networks developed in previous places of displacement were an effective support system. Some returnee young men who came back and searched for their family members complained that their relatives did not want to support them. Kuok told me once:

> I have asked my relatives for the cows from my sisters' marriages that are supposed to be my share. This would help me to settle in, because when I came I had no money and my parents were dead. But my uncle is dodging and he is pretending that there are no cows. He is cheating me, but there is nothing I can do. Sometimes it is difficult to get the property from your relatives. If they love you, they will share with you. If they are stingy, they will hide it and tell you that all cows died during the war. Since you were away, you cannot do anything. My friends from Kakuma help me out for now.

Others like Gatleak decided to take family members to court in order to claim their share of cattle. This was one of the issues which made some Kakuma returnees rely on their friends from Kakuma rather than families in settling in. Disputes over cattle and land were commonly heard by the Ler county court, which I often attended. They usually involved returnees and those who had stayed behind, further estranging members of war-separated households. Nyajial, a woman chief in Ler explained:

> These cases are on increase now. Many returnees, especially from Khartoum, are coming now and demanding their property. For us, it is difficult to find the cattle. For the land, we always advise them to go back to the village and share the land with their relatives.

The issue of land was hotly debated during a land workshop convened by the IRC in Ler. A number of female participants claimed their legal rights to land and complained about the discrepancies of law enforcement. Nyalada, an SPLA women's secretary in Ler noted that:

> The constitution says that we are all equal now, that women and men have the same right to own resources, including land. But this is just *cieng kume* [government laws]. In *cieng nuära* [community/village laws], women still have no rights. When we want

> to buy land, we have to register it in the names of our deceased husbands or brothers, or fathers. Even the commissioner here does not practice what the government law says. He still follows the culture [customary practice].

Other women shared their stories of being chased away from land belonging to their husbands and fathers and not being able to claim their rights in court. Nyajung, who spent seven years in Kakuma, commented:

> In Kakuma, women and girls were given rights by the UN. If men abused them, they could go to the court and got their compensation. But here, there are no women rights. When your land is taken away from you, no one is going to hear your complaints.

Although the 'modernity' project of creating a democratic southern Sudan based on rule of law, democracy and equality of rights was being forged theoretically its implementation in daily community life was very different. The GoSS has included gender equality and commitment to the promotion of women rights in all spheres, often under pressure from donors and development agencies. However, for women in towns and villages, access to legal rights remains a distant option.

For those who were displaced internally within Sudan, it was relatively easier to 'come home' even if for a short visit before making a decision to 'make a home'. Those who became refugees across borders found these visits more difficult due to the physical distance between the places of exile and their 'home' destination. Also, for those who were away for a short time (a few years) 'homecoming' was usually easier due to access to their previous resources (land and cattle) and remaining family and kin members. Tito, one of Kuok's friends, who was away from Nuerland for ten years, upon his return in 2004 decided to settle in Ler:

> I had some education, was used to living in town and could not imagine living with my parents in the village. I came to Ler, but I knew no one here and I had to struggle. Settling-in takes time, especially if you do not have resources and relatives to help you out. The government will not support you. Now, after three years of being here, I found a job, and I have a house. But I am still not completely settled.

For those who were away for a decade or more, like in other refugee situations (Black and Koser 1999; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Hammond 2004a), coming 'home' usually meant constructing a new life, often in a different place, finding new resources and

(re)creating social networks of family and relatives. Those who did not find their immediate kin members, forged new community bonds either with distant kin or created new *maar* (kinship) relations with friends and companions with whom they shared displacement experiences. Hence, emplacement meant (re)interpreting *maar.* It included being part of community and finding one's place within it. This was linked to performing other community obligations and rituals such as extending hospitality to others, being able to marry and assisting others. Gendered emplacement meant acquiring a meaning for oneself within the wider web of social and community relations that varied for women and men. Access to land and resources was experienced differently depending on gender, age, marital status and social support system.[179] Thus, place-making in the aftermath of the wars and with the encroaching 'modernity' project of the state was gendered and gendering questioning some of the established norms of resource ownership. While for men permanent settlement through access to land was guaranteed not only through the customary practice but also law, for women access to land had to be negotiated through and was dependent on men. As with returnees in Nicaragua (Phillips 2004) and West Indian migrants returning to Barbados (Gmelch 2004), issues of land title and property rights created tensions with those who had stayed behind and often marginalised those who had less social support, usually single headed women households. Thus, their process of settling-in required more intensive investment and struggle to devise creative ways of managing marginalisation and finding means of accessing livelihoods. This I now examine.

5. 'WHEN WOMEN BECOME MEN': LIVELIHOODS AND GENDERED EMPLACEMENT

5.1. Fears of 'return' and changing livelihood strategies in Nuerland

Securing a livelihood was one of the main concerns of refugees in Kakuma contemplating moving to Sudan. Women and men, young and old worried about making a living in Nuerland. Kuok was initially delaying his return due to lack of a job. Although he had a good education, as the only Nuer who finished the Teachers Training College in Kakuma, his prospects of finding employment without connections in southern Sudan were meagre. Several young men who went back searched in vain

[179] See also North and Simmons 1999a, 1999b for women returnees' access to land in Guatemala.

for jobs with local government, as teachers or with NGOs despite having qualifications. Some came back frustrated to Kakuma to look for further education and survival opportunities.

For women, especially widows, the main concern was access to income. Nyakong, a wife of a pastor who spent 20 years in Ethiopian and Kenyan refugee camps, explained:

> The problem is that we have come here [Kakuma] and have seen the goodness of education. But for us the women, who have not finished education, there are no possibilities. We are worried that if we go home and we have no education we might not get jobs. We want to get education first, abroad for example, and then we can go [to Sudan].

During a meeting with two commissioners from Equatoria who came to Kakuma to encourage repatriation, several women voiced their concerns about 'return'. The commissioners stressed that those who are educated should go back to southern Sudan to rebuild it and they will be able to find good jobs. One of the women responded: "*And what happens to us, the old women, who suffered so much during war and brought up all the children? We don't have education, when we go back, what will we do? Sweep commissioners' compounds?*" Not only did women fear further post-return marginalisation but the discourse employed by Sudanese politicians and humanitarian workers – praising 'skills, education, language and jobs' – marginalised uneducated and illiterate women. The changing employment market in southern Sudan and emphasis on the need for a 'qualified workforce' were sidelining uneducated and illiterate population, mainly women.

For the Nuer in Kakuma, the idea of 'home' and 'going home' to Nuerland was linked to being free, independent and self-sufficient. The idea of freedom and belonging was pervasive in their narratives of home. For both women and men, access to livelihoods, coupled with education and health services, was an important determinant of their decision to repatriate. They were also aware that cultivating land, fishing and herding cattle, as was done previously, might not be a viable livelihood strategy in southern Sudan. While some have forgotten or never learned how to cultivate land, others realised that in the changing economy, money (through paid employment) was becoming increasingly more important in household economic strategies.

There were also significant changes in livelihood strategies that took place at 'home'. Nyajuc, the grandmother of my hosts, a widow in her late seventies, stayed in Ler during the wars. She had given birth to twelve children of whom only five had survived. Three of her children were displaced to Ethiopia, Khartoum and Kenya and one son, Gatkoi (see chapter 5) joined the SPLA. She was my immediate neighbour and we often shared stories. Sitting under a mango tree, she told me about the changes of livelihoods that took place among the Nuer in the past 50 years:

> When I was young, we relied on cultivation and cattle. Money had no value at that time, and our lives were about cattle. This was before *cieng kume* [government]. Then the white people came, the missionaries and the British colonisers and with them a government. Men started migrating to Khartoum for labour, and traders from the north reached Ler. Some [Nuer] men became traders, like my husband. Money came to our lives, but for most of us land and cattle were still the main ways of making a living. Now, after the *koor kume* [government war], lives of the Nuer have changed completely. People in this generation have learned, they can use money to buy food. They don't cultivate, but buy food from the market. Also the UN gives them food. There are also government jobs, in the offices, or as teachers. Even soldiers and police receive money. The government gives education to children [boys], they can get a job and bring something to eat. For us, the old women and those who are not educated, we do not have much chance. We can only get some money from *kume* [government] and make *kong* [beer].

An elder from a nearby village of Piliny told me:

> The war has brought a lot of change to the Nuer. Now, to be a man is to be educated and to get a job. Everything is about money now. We do not know where the money comes from. We see the goodness of the money when we can use it and buy things, like the bed and the mosquito net and the food. Also there is a change towards cattle. Before people never sold cows, but nowadays they sell them because there is not enough food. The land has become like an old man and is not producing any longer. We, the old people, we do not produce, we only need food. And for this, we need money. Even my wife earns money now. She makes reed mats and sells them to the northern traders. This is how we get some small *yiou* [money]. In the rainy season, we still cultivate. Our sons who are in Kenya and in America send us money sometimes so we can buy beds and chairs.

These narratives suggest a fundamental change in the livelihoods of the Nuer from cultivation and cattle herding to trade, labour migration and paid employment. These were others signs of development, modernity and change in the lives of the Nuer. Although most (especially those who had stayed behind) still relied on cattle herding and land cultivation, other ways of making a living were being introduced. These were usually coupled with trade, as many stayee men ran small business in the market. Some younger educated men worked as salaried teachers, priests, county administrators,

nurses and NGO employees. There had been hardly any changes that took place in agriculture. Women and men continued to cultivate mainly sorghum and maize, while some NGOs encouraged people to introduce new crops and vegetables (tomatoes, spinach, beans and potatoes). Cultivation was done exclusively manually, as cattle were reserved for bridewealth and sacrifice.

Nyajuc and Tot's narratives also point to the emergence of money as a primary exchange mechanism in the wake of the post-2005 peace agreement, continuing the changes brought by colonisation and the emergence of government (see Hutchinson 1996). Monetarisation led to the emergence of a banking system in Bentiu as two banks, the Obdurman Bank run by northern Sudanese and the GoSS controlled-Nile Commercial Bank opened up. During my visits to the bank, I often saw soldiers, NGO and UN employees as well as local government officials depositing salaries or arranging transfers to relatives abroad. Inexorably Nuer cattle-keepers were becoming money-keepers. The influx of remittances from relatives resettled in the west not only brought an influx of cash but created another transnational connection for the 'local' Nuer.

The elders' narratives suggest two other important trends: paid 'office' jobs were mainly open to educated men and women resorted to other ways of making money. During an evening chat my host, Nyakuma, who had stayed in Ler during the conflict, told me about family finances. Her husband, Gatchang, worked as a nurse in a clinic in Rubkona, where he lived with his third wife and their two children. Nyakuma lived in Ler with their four children. She told me that her husband divides his monthly salary between the two families and in addition, supports his mother. Nyakuma received US$150 per month and, as the money was not enough, she had to work. Like many other women (stayees as well as returnees) in Ler, she started a tea business in the market. A couple of chairs, kettle, charcoal, tea glasses, tea, coffee and sugar were the initial investment. Every morning, she left the house at 7am and returned late at night. Her profit was some US$2 per day, enough to buy food for the children. Food was her main monthly expense, followed by soap, charcoal and other basic household items. Nyakuma complained about her co-wife, Catharina, who lived with the husband in Rubkona:

> She is very lazy, she has only two children, but she doesn't work. She only sits at home and cooks for the children. She sleeps the whole day instead of helping Gatchang. I think it is better when a wife and husband both work. The wife brings something home for the family and the husband does the same. It is easier. When there is no job it is bad, because there is no money and no food.

Nyakuma's narrative suggests a major change in attitudes towards 'earning money' and contributing to the household. In the past, women's work was limited to nurturing the household, including taking care of the children, cultivating land, milking cows and cooking (see chapter 4; Hutchinson 1990). In the emerging money-dominated economy, women recognised that they needed to make their own financial contributions to improve household wellbeing. Women who only did the 'housework' were perceived as lazy. In Ler, Rubkona and Bentiu, women's paid work was visible in the emergence of women-owned businesses such as tea/coffee making, selling reed mats, cooking, cleaning and providing services in government offices. Although often frowned upon by men, and perceived as 'not real jobs', women's income both beneffited their households and gave them enhanced financial security. "*If you have a job and own money, you can even leave your husband when he mistreats you. But if you have no* [own] *money, you have to rely on him to bring food home*," commented Nyakuma. This is consistent with other findings that suggest that women's greater contribution to household income increases their bargaining position within the household and strengthens their autonomy (Kabeer 1988; 1994; Pessar 1999).

In the socio-economic survey, 25 of 30 respondents reported relying mainly on cultivation and cattle herding prior to displacement. Only a few were previously involved in trade and had migrated to the north in search of paid labour. They were, however, returning to a dramatically different post-war situation. Most of their property had been stolen by enemies, cattle killed and land expropriated by the government or relatives. To establish oneself one needed resources that included money. As Nyakuol told me, "*if you have no yiou* [money] *and your relatives do not have cattle that you can sell, you have to struggle to settle-in. All is about money now*".

5.2. Gendered *nyuuri piny* (settling-in): access to livelihoods

Establishment of a viable livelihood, be it through cultivation, access to cattle, or employment, was the second most important factor of settling-in, identified by 24 of 30

respondents. The majority of women and men described 'having a job' as part of being fully settled. However, finding income was not easy, for both women and men returnees. Upon her arrival in Ler Nyakuol struggled:

> A life of a widow in Sudan is not easy. I have decided to settle far away from my husband's relatives, because I do not want to be abused by them and I prefer my independence. But this means I am also alone and have to rely on myself. My brothers cannot help me too much, because they are also struggling. They gave me four head of cattle and two goats. I sold two cows and a goat and decided to start a business. But here, for a woman, it is not easy to run a business. All the traders in the market are men, and if you as a woman want to open a shop, you have to register it in the husband's name.

Four months after her arrival in Ler, Nyakuol opened a stall in the market. She also built a shop. To overcome the prohibition of trading for women, she rented it to two Darfuri traders. From this income, she was able to construct a house and send her two eldest children to school in Bentiu. The rest of the money she used to hire (male) help to prepare her garden for cultivation.

Other returnee widows or single women also searched for ways of making money. Two, like Nyakuol, started their own market businesses. Nyakwony, Nyakuol's best friend, although still married preferred to live without her husband. Her husband, a well-paid NGO driver, had seven wives of whom Nyakwony was the oldest. She had spent most of her life in Khartoum and then in Kenya. She had some basic education and previous business experience having run a small shop before leaving Ler in 1990. On arrival in Ler in 2006 she decided to settle away from her husband: "*When you get old, it is better to stay away from your husband. It is fewer quarrels. My children are adults now and they can help me out as well. One son is in Australia and a son-in-law is in America. They send some support*," she told me. Her daughter who was married to a 'lost boy' in America brought a TV from Kenya. In Ler, there was no electricity and generators were restricted to NGOs, the commissioner and a few well-to-do traders. Nyakwony sold the TV to a trader wishing to open a 'café/bar' in the market. She used the money to open a shop which she rented to northern traders. She used the income to build a hut and dig a latrine.

Another widow got employed as a cook with IRC. In Ethiopia and Kakuma she had worked with several NGOs: "*I have my diplomas and a bit of education, and*

experience with working with foreigners. I know how to cook, and this is the reason I got a job with IRC. For us, the returnee women who know something, are a bit educated and have seen other cultures, it is easier to get jobs." Nyachan's observation was correct. Most women employed by NGOs and the commissioner were 'returnees'. Three of the Kakuma older single women worked as cleaners in the MSF hospital in Ler and another two got jobs with the commissioner's office as cooks and cleaners. Women were employed in 'jobs' perceived as 'female' which largely reflected their 'domestic' responsibilities.

In general, both women and men reported that it was much more difficult to find jobs for women. Kuok explained this:

> There are not many paid jobs here. The ones that exist, like office jobs, teachers, nurses, or in the government, need educated people. The problem here in Sudan is that women are not educated, since they were not sent to school. The ones who are educated are men. This is the reason that women have to do menial jobs, like cleaning and serving food.

Among the 15 returnee women interviewed for the survey, only one had finished primary education and two had completed six classes of primary school. Among the 15 returnee men, all had completed at least five classes of primary education. Five had finished secondary school of whom two had obtained university degrees. While lack of education constrained women from entering the labour market, so did their domestic obligations. Nyachan explained: "*Also, there is a certain problem with jobs for women. The office jobs require you to be in the office the full day, and as a woman you have to take care of the children, you have to cook for them. A woman cannot be in the office the whole time.*"

Other sources of income for women included beer making and government salaries for widows and former combatants. Nyakuol's sister, Nyapiny, on arrival in Ler got a job with the local police. Both the police and army were hiring women mainly for 'domestic work', creating possibilities of establishing independent incomes for women.

Nyayena, a young mother in her early twenties, who had spent ten years in Khartoum and then seven in Kakuma, returned to Ler in 2007. She was the daughter of Nyakwony. She also became one of my closest friends in Ler and we often spent time

cooking and chatting. She had problems with her husband, a 'lost boy' who had returned to Ler. He had failed to complete the bride-wealth payment and had taken another wife. She was very upset and told me that he did not support her. Nyayena had finished a year of secondary school in Kenya and upon her arrival in Ler looked for a job. She was hired as a midwife in the MSF hospital in Ler, the only woman working in a professional job. "*As a woman, you need your own money, so you do not have to rely on your husband. When he mistreats you, you can even take the children and go away. I also do not want to rely on my father, and this is the reason that I think is good to have a job.*" Like Nyayena, all other returnee young women and girls from Kakuma valued paid employment, and talked about the need to have a 'job' in order to establish greater autonomy from their husbands. The majority of stayee women relied mainly on cultivation, with a few women running coffee/tea businesses in the market, selling reed mats or doing public works (usually cleaning). Their access to money was much more limited than those of returnee women. As other literature shows, access to income allows women to better negotiate their position within the household and strike more favourable bargains within system of patriarchal conjugal relations (see Kabeer 1988, 1994; Whitehead 1979; Pessar 1999).

Men's access to income was easier. All fifteen male survey participants had secured paid employment within 2-12 months of their arrival in Nuerland. Some returnees had got jobs before repatriating to Sudan, usually with NGOs, UN or the GoSS, thus helping them afford to repatriate. Others, like Kuok and his friends, struggled to find employment after their 'return'. Almost all of them complained of job discrimination by local authorities. During one of our chats, Kuok expressed his frustrations and challenges in establishing livelihood after return:

> We those who were away from this land, we do not know how to cultivate and how to take care of cattle. We have forgotten this. Also, when we come back, most of us have no property [cows and land] so it is difficult to get a living. When you come from Kenya or East Africa and you got some education, people here in Sudan will envy you. Those in powerful positions in the government [southern Sudanese local government] are the ones who never left Sudan and thought in the bush. Some of them were also in Khartoum. They only give jobs to those who they know. We the ones who were away from here for a long time, we are not known. People here feel threatened because we have some education and speak English. They think that we will take their jobs. This is the reason they do not want to give us jobs. The only places were you can get employment is with NGOs and the UN, but they do not have many vacancies and you have to know someone to get a job there.

Many returnee young men from Kakuma found employment as nurses or medical assistants with MSF while others worked for the IRC and other international NGOs in Ler or with local Sudanese NGOs. None were employed by the commissioner's office. His staff had either never left Ler or had been with him in Khartoum. Among the 15 men interviewed in the survey all were employed as teachers, nurses or UN/NGO staffers. Two worked as traders and one relied on cattle herding and land cultivation. Within two months of his arrival, Kuok was registered as a government teacher and although he was a ghost teacher, not actually teaching, received a monthly salary of US$200 per month.[180] He additionally got two teaching positions with a Sudanese NGO and worked as my research assistant.

The market was also changing. It had been a male preserve with eateries and shops mainly owned and frequented by men. Now, *qahwa* places although exclusively visited by men were run by women, especially those displaced to Khartoum. The Arab habits of eating *fuul* and drinking coffee, were brought by returnees from Khartoum. I was often the only woman drinking and eating in the market, although at the end of my stay, I noticed that several women who came from Khartoum smoked water pipes and drank tea and coffee in public, stretching gender boundaries. Most eateries were owned by northern traders as for the Nuer men it was a gendered taboo to enter the kitchen, perceived as a 'female' space by both women and men (see also Hutchinson 1990). While in the 1980s Hutchinson reported the complete absence of Nuer male cooks there were now several men, mainly returnees from Khartoum, who had opened food stalls and cooked. The gendered division of labour was slowly changing, especially outside the household space. Kuok pointed this out to me one day over a bowl of *fuul*: "*We, the men, cheat women. We cook outside the house, but when we come home, we pretend that this is a female task. But in Kakuma most of us men cooked since women were not around, and here you see some who continue to do it. But then they get challenged by women who tell them that they are doing women's work.*"

[180] The state ministry of education registered large numbers of teachers although there were not enough teaching positions available in the schools. In Ler, several of the Kakuma returnee young men, including Kuok, received teachers' salaries despite the fact that there were not enough teaching openings at the Ler primary school. Instead, Kuok worked as a teacher with a local NGO who paid him an additional salary.

Cultivation remained a complementary source of livelihood for both women and men. During the rainy season, the residents of Ler were busy preparing fields and gardens and cultivating crops. Most women returnees planted small gardens near their houses with maize, sorghum and some vegetables. I helped several returnee women, Nyabol, my neighbour, Nyakuol and Nyachakuoth, an elderly woman, to plant their gardens. While planting seeds and exchanging jokes Nyachakuoth, who had spent five years in Kakuma where I met her, told me that "*I feel that I am settled. When you cultivate your land, you really know you are at home. You are free to produce your own food*." It was ten months since she had returned and through daily struggle for household survival finally felt she was home.

5.3. Becoming autonomous: the changing gender division of labour

> Now women come to the court and ask for divorce. Before it was rare; the war has changed people. Many couples were separated during the war, and husbands feel that they lost everything. Men often went to the bush, to Khartoum or migrated to East Africa. Women either had stayed behind or left for refuge and stayed away from their husbands. When they come together, husbands drink because they have no jobs or no property [due to war], and women now demand that their husbands buy clothes and provide other things than only food. Women can also get their own money through small jobs or business, and they can even go away and stay by themselves. They do not need men too much to take care of them.

This is the explanation that the Ler chief, Kuong, offered when I asked about a large number of divorces filed by women which I noticed during my visits to local courts in Ler and Bentiu. Access to alternative livelihoods and independent income marked a slow emergence of autonomous women–led households. Not only were returnee women, especially widows including Nyakuol, choosing to establish autonomous households away from their husbands' relatives, but so too were married women like Nyakwony, returnees and stayees. For those women who were by themselves in Kakuma, where they enjoyed access to limited rights, greater recognition due to gender policies and access to autonomous livelihoods, return to Nuerland meant (re)unification with their husbands and families. This involved reconciliation and (re)building of conjugal relations, often subjugation to local expectations of 'a good wife' combined with limiting their space of decision-making and powers. Although no written records of divorce existed in Ler, from the marital survey that I carried out with 60 returnee and stayee women and men (see chapter 8), as well as from the court cases that I attended

in Ler and Bentiu, divorce was clearly on the rise. As with Hutchinson's (1990) findings among the Leek Nuer in 1980s, the willingness of chiefs to grant divorce was increasing. Marriages were being dissolved even after the birth of numerous children. This was a continuation of a trend noticed by Hutchinson in the 1980s. Although divorcee women were usually eager to re-marry, there were also some who decided to establish their own households. The concepts of being a woman and women entitlements and responsibilities were being contested and (re)negotiated in post-war Nuerland.

Nyalada, the SPLM Ler gender secretary, who had stayed in Ler during the war, explained some of the reasons for changes in women's lives:

> Before men did not allow women to work outside the home. But now, there are many women who are employed. The situation forced people to change. Women have to do work because they have to feed their children. Many women became widows during the war, and now they have to manage by themselves. Working outside the house brings change. The change did not start by itself. If the woman is employed somewhere and she has income, she then realises that she has a right to take a part. Men ignore women as housewives. They say that this is the work women have to do, but they do not consider it. They will consider you [a woman] if you have income. Then they give you some rights and respect. There are areas, however, where women are still not equal, like land ownership. I know no lady who registered her land in her name. Also, some men feel threatened by the power of women who work outside. This is the reason they do not allow them to go outside to look for jobs, and they even want to control the dress of the women. But some women challenge it now, especially those who are a bit educated and have seen other places [were displaced].

Emergence of autonomous women households was not only because women decided to challenge patriarchal relations at home and free themselves from often abusive relationships. In most cases, women's access to autonomous income and the desire to get a job was dictated by the post-war situation in which they found themselves. The crisis created by war and changes in the livelihoods of the Nuer forced women to enter paid employment, especially those living in towns and market centres. Crises thus revealed contradictions in the material basis for patriarchal relations and opened up opportunities for women to improve their intra-household bargaining positions (Kandiyoti 1988). As with Eritrean women returnees studied by Kibreab (2003), Nuer returnee women often suffer greater challenges than men in settling-in, being more constrained in access to resources. Through creative ways of accessing livelihoods they carve out for themselves a greater degree of autonomy and enhance their intra-

household bargaining position and access to social power. Examples of successful returnee women were being replicated by local women, including my host. Conjugal relations based on exchange were thus being questioned and renegotiated (Whitehead 1981).

In the absence of men, some women not only took on male responsibilities as household providers but also entered other roles perceived as male. For example, Nyakuol together with her sisters negotiated bridewealth payments with the male relatives of Gatbel, who was marrying one of the daughters of Nyapiny, Nyakuol's sister. In the absence of their husbands, brothers and father, the women (Nyakuol and her sisters) sat down with the male relatives of Gatbel to settle the bridewealth, a task traditionally performed by male relatives of the groom and the bride. These women were not necessarily challenging the existing gender order, but rather taking on some of the male-inscribed tasks to continue the custom of marriage based on bridewealth.

Government policies and returnee experiences were also changing local attitudes towards women and their contributions to the household. Nyalada pointed out that:

> Before women had no rights and were not allowed to talk in front of others, in general meetings. Now, the situation is changing. The peace agreement gave women 25% representation, and now women have to be in all government positions. Also, many people have some ideas. In the past there were no educated women. Now, there are people who went outside and saw that women have rights in other countries. They adapt the cultures of other countries. Now the minds of women are more open and they are serious about participation in public life and working.

Displacement and exposure to other cultures as well as GoSS gender equality-policies opened new possibilities for renegotiation of gender relations. Access to money and autonomous livelihoods meant that the process of settling-in had gendering effects on gender division of labour. After a visit at Nyakuol's house, Kuok remarked: "*Look at Nyakuol, she is like a man now. She can take care of her own house, she even brings food home, and she has a business. She is also a leader among the women. She has the strength of a man*." Thus, independent widows who were struggling to establish their own households and support their families were at times perceived as 'social men'. This had origins in the social position of infertile women, who with the cattle of their parents were able to marry a wife and establish their own households. They were also

doing ‘men’s work’, by cultivating, building *luak* (cattle-byre) and owning cattle and land. They were perceived in the community as ‘social men’ and given the same degree of respect and possibility to contribute to community affairs (see Hutchinson 1990; Amadiume 1987). Similarly, new emerging independent households of some of the returnee women were gaining social position of ‘men’. A number of returnee women friends were shown respect in the community by being invited to participate in SPLM political campaigns and elections, to give speeches and to assume leadership positions in the community. Thus, these women were carving for themselves a new place, entering spaces previously reserved for men.

For some returnee men, life in Ler was a challenge to the new visions of gender division of labour which they had practiced in Kakuma. A 28-year old Gatmai who had spent ten years away seeking refuge and education in Khartoum, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda was faced with a post-return challenge:

> They [the people who stayed behind during the war] see us as women, because we do not do the work of the men. We do not know how to build a house, we do not take care of the cattle, and we have no cattle in fact. Also, we do not know how to do things that they [the men in the village] do. We do not know how to fight. We used to know how to fight with spears, but now we have forgotten it. They make fun of us and say that the work that we are doing here is not real work. That we are like women.

Those who left Sudan as very young children and grew up in a different culture in exile tried to continue performing domestic tasks after return. They were seen as ‘women’ and often challenged by men as well as women.

For some men, homecoming and establishment of viable livelihoods marked a process of strengthening their masculinity (see chapter 8). Some, especially those who were married and had children, complained that in Kakuma they were reliant on UNHCR for food and protection (see chapter 6). Establishing oneself at ‘home’ through access to jobs, income and ability to provide for the family was a way of regaining control. In a sense, although experienced through continuous struggle and effort to piece together a livelihood, emplacement after return was for most men marked by strengthening the position as men.

6. CONCLUSION

In Ler, returnees were pursuing specific strategies to make a place they once called 'home' or a place that they chose to reside in to make into a 'home'. While connected through war-time migratory experiences beyond the village to wider Nuer diasporic communities in Sudan, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia, their image of *cieng* expanded. Some maintained multiple 'homes' and households in Sudan and transnationally. However, accessing land, establishing a viable livelihood and being considered part of the community were the main constituents of *nyuuri piny* (being settled). It also entailed transfer of acquired identity from a 'returnee' or *jäal* (guest/visitor) to a 'citizen' (*raan*).

Despite the rhetoric of 'going back' or 'going home' used in reference to the process of refugee return, the process of displacement is irreversible and there is never a 'return' to the past or to an empty place. 'Homecoming' (*beben cieng*) and settling-in (*nyuuri piny*) take both imaginative and social forms, representing for some a continuation of 'displacement'. As Nuer experiences show, 'homecoming' (*beben cieng*) means not (re)creating a home, but rather turning a place that has changed and is inhabited by those who went through diverse experiences into a 'home'. These changes, as we have seen, vary by gender, age, length and trajectories of displacement. It is both a gendered and gendering process, involving often a (re)negotiation of gender relations.

For the Nuer women and men, *bebeng cieng* and *nyuuri piny* have been important elements in emplacement. Emplacement has involved actions and interactions to make not only a place but also a landscape of social interactions to feel like 'home'. The connections that people were gradually establishing to place were physical (building a house), economic (getting a job, farming land), social ((re)creating new and expanding other social networks through re-casting kinship relations, through marriage, socialisation and by transforming ties of friendship based on shared experiences) and civic/political (becoming an official in the community and acquiring rights to participate in political and communal life).

This concept of *cieng* ('home'/village/community) as rooted in social relations rather than merely in a specific place, further contributes to discussions of links between

place, identity and culture. For the pastoralist Nuer, although 'homemaking' was a long-term process bound up with social relations of *maar* and presence of ancestors rather than a specific physical place. In the absence of relatives or the unwillingness to (re)cast previous kinship relations, it also involved creating new kinship ties, not necasserily based on blood but rather on previous shared experiences. Here I concur with Turton who argues that:

> […]to understand how a sense of place becomes bound up with a person's social and individual identity, we must treat place, not as a stage for social activity but as a 'product' of it. Such an understanding of the link between people and place helps us to appreciate that displacement is not just about the loss of place, but also about the struggle to *make* a place in the world, where meaningful action and shared understanding is possible' (2005:258).

The emerging nationalist discourses of southern Sudan as homeland propagated during the war and in refugee camps altered the meaning of 'home' for the Nuer. As a result, home became associated with a specific country, rights, freedoms, territory and boundaries.

However, the notions of 'homecoming' and 'settling-in' are produced differently when gender, age, marital status and length of displacement are taken into account. Al-Ali's research among Iraqi refugee women (2002: 97) demonstrates the need to avoid homogenisation of women's experience. I have shown how different women depending on their marital status and access to resources pursued a variety of emplacement strategies. I thus contest the undifferentiated 'women' (and men) category that conceals the complexity of women's (and men's) lives and the differences in their living situation (Moore 1994). Settling-in for (some) returnee women might, at times, prove more difficult, especially in the gendered access to resources and re-establishment of their previous family networks. However, like Eritrean refugee women in Khartoum studied by Kibreab (1999) and Mozambican refugee women in Malawi (Callamard 1992), widows returning to southern Sudan proved resilient in making the most of their situation. They adopted a variety of survival strategies which often affected gender division of labour, with slow emergence of autonomous women's households. Hence, some women emerge as agents of change, rather than vulnerable victims of the emplacement processes. They often devise creative strategies to overcome unequal

gendered access to resources and livelihoods, even if using their 'feminine positions' in accessing paid employment.

These diverse settling-in and emplacement strategies in accessing land and livelihoods proved to have gendering effects on the position of women (and men) in the community. Through the active survival strategies of women to establish viable livelihoods for their families, the bases of gender ideologies were being subverted. With the emergence of autonomous women's households and significant women-earned income, women were gaining greater household and community bargaining power. State-making projects which include the rhetoric of gender equality and promotion of women's participation in political life were also opening up spaces for greater gender equality and awareness of greater possibilities for women. They were, however, continuously challenged through local practices.

Emplacement upon 'return' involved negotiation and (re)establishment of social relations with those who had stayed behind, migrated elsewhere or forgind bonds with previous friends from displacement. As much as displaced people have changed, so too have their 'homes'. 'Homecoming' involves reciprocal processes of piecing together disjointed lives and creating a new 'place' and 'home'. The experiences of returnees – whether from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia or Khartoum – or regardless of whether they had returned with the assistance of international organisations, the Sudanese government or on their own volition reflect the wisdom of Edward Said that 'return home' is never an uncomplicated and homogenous experience. It is also a creative process of community formation, relying on old kinship ties and reinterpreting new relationships by transforming ties of friendship into new forms of *maar* (kinship). In this way, *cieng* acquires a new sense based on becoming and being part of a community beyond previous kinship bonds and finding one own's place within it. These new social networks enable women and men to create their own household and *cieng* through marriage, another gendered process of emplacement to which I turn next.

Figure 17: Returnee young men, 'Lost Boys' at a marriage ceremony in Ler, 2007.

Figure 18: New-fashioned brides, Ler marriage ceremony, 2007.

CHAPTER 8
TOT[181]*:*
GENDERED EMPLACEMENT:
IDENTITIES, IDEOLOGIES AND MARRIAGE

1. SUITS, TROUSERS, MINI-SKIRTS AND LEARNING TO WEAR A *TUAC*

Preparations for *tuoc*, the wedding dance marking a stage in the Nuer marriage process,[182] took time. On a May morning in 2007 the bride's family was busy cooking and getting her ready while in a *luak* (cattle-byre) negotiations around bridewealth were taking place. Half of the cows were transferred from the groom's to the bride's family. The groom, Kuem, a 'lost boy', was recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1988 and taken to Ethiopia for military training. A refugee in Kakuma from 1991 to 2006, after having had finished secondary school in Nairobi, he found a job with an NGO in Nuerland and thus returned to his father's home for the first time in 18 years. His father, an influential local *guankuoth* (earth priest) and a brother of Riek Machar, the vice-president of southern Sudan, had stayed in Ler during the wars while most of his children were either killed or displaced throughout Sudan and East Africa.

Kuem in his late 20s was marrying a 15-16-year-old girl who had never left Ler. Daughter of a high-ranking influential commander, beautiful and considered "somehow educated" – having finished four grades of primary school – she commanded a high bride-price. The father of Nyaluak demanded 70 head of cattle, the highest bridewealth payment known in Ler where between 30-35 was the norm. Due to his education and lucrative job and the girl's attributes, Kuem was being asked a premium price.

As half the cattle were transferred I heard singing and saw groups of dancing women and men. The men were carrying spears and sticks and singing in praise of the forthcoming marriage. Both the groom and his best friend wore elegant black suits and a *tuac* (leopard skin) tied around their waists (figure 17). The horns of large oxen

[181] *Tot*, from about mid-March to mid-September, represents the rainy season. Cattle and youth return from *wec* (cattle camps) and life concentrates in the village (*cieng*). New marriages are formed and the land planted.
[182] See chapter 4.

earmarked for celebratory slaughter were decorated with ribbons and flowers. The meat was to be shared by the bride's family. Two smaller cows were gifts to her *cieng*. While some 'traditional' elements of *tuoc* were preserved – negotiations and transfer of cattle, singing and sharing of food, 'modern' customs were also apparent. This was not just the presence of dignitaries with satellite phones and armed guards for fashion was also changing. The groom's party, all former 'lost boys' and returnees, wore elegant dark suits and white shirts, resembling models from a fashion magazine. Yet, the girls had to remove *tuac* tied around the men's waists, signifying an opportunity for a 'play' between the youth. The groom had a spear in his hand, symbol of Nuer manhood, but looked perplexed and unsure what he was supposed to do with it. The bride and her friends had also conformed to fashion brought by returnees. Instead of traditional decoration of beads around their waists, girls wore tight jeans, mini-skirts and trousers and had colourful hair extensions *à la* East African *mode* (figure 18).

Among the groom's men, I noticed Jany, a returnee young man who had spent most of his life in Khartoum and in Kenya and had only recently arrived in Bentiu. When I inquired why he was carrying a stick, he explained:

> I have no idea. This is my first Sudanese wedding. I just came from Bentiu for the wedding because Kuem is one of my relatives, but also a friend from Kenya. I am just watching other people and trying to figure out what I should do. I was given this stick, because people told me that I have to have one. But I am not sure what I am supposed to do with it. This morning there was a lot of running – we went with the bull to the house of the girl and then were running up and down from one house to another. I am tired now. I am newly arrived here and I have to learn to be a Nuer, I have to learn all these traditions. This is part of making a home here.

Kuem saw me and shouted happily: *"Hey, NyaPiliny khaway, are you coming to my wedding today? I am getting married and will finally have my home. This is a real homecoming for me, I will be a* [real] *Nuer!"*

In the afternoon, I went to the wedding dance (*touc*) on the outskirts of Ler, near the *luak* of Nyaluak's father. During dancing and courting between the bride's and groom's relatives, young men with *gaar* and *mut* (spears) started fighting. I was told this was a common occurrence at Nuer weddings. The sudden arrival of armed soldiers who dispersed the spear-carrying youth was a novel addition to the wedding ceremony. Surrounded by a group of women singing and shouting wedding rhymes, the groom

and his mates looked bored and lost. In his elegant suit, *tuac* and spear the Kenyan-educated Kuem felt confused, later explaining: "*I felt really lost, like a lost boy, who is between different cultures.*" He was trying to make sense of his own diverse experiences and find his own Nuer identity. Marriage to a local girl and creation of his own household was supposed to give him a 'local' identity – now he was going to be a 'real man', a responsible man in his community, no longer perceived as a lost person with many identities and dilemmas.

The diverse experiences and images of the wedding reflected bewilderment and dilemmas, the struggle between holding on to a strong 'culture' and 'tradition' while trying to embrace *cieng mi pai ben* ('modernity') and a 'new' lifestyle often brought by returnees. My neighbours, friends and passers-by were preoccupied with the transforming social relations, especially changes in the behaviour of the youth, contestations around appropriate behaviour of being a 'good' girl (*nyal ma goa*) or a 'respectable' woman and a 'real Nuer' man (*wur nuära*). Contestations around gender identities were part of settling-in for women and men returnees who often referred to *nyuuri piny* as 'becoming a real Nuer women/man'. Another gendered element of emplacement was through marriage and establishment of their own households, the pathways to becoming an adult and 'local' *raan* – citizen and human. The social and cultural landscape of settling-in and emplacement for returning populations was dominated by reminiscences of wars and militarisation of Nuer society.

This chapter focuses on the social and gender aspects of emplacement and settling-in through the practice and negotiation of gender relations, and in particular gender identities, norms and marriage. This is directly linked to the forming of community and social networks as part of the emplacement processe discussed in chapter 7. The transforming kinship and social ties forged in previous places of displacement, or (re)creating kin based *maar* was intertwined with the ability to forge a new household. Hence, marrying and gender relations after return have to be seen in the context of new social networks. This chapter attempts to provide some answers to the following questions: How are 'homecoming' and settling-in experienced differently by young women and men and how 'return' is intertwined with gender relations, identity and self? To what extent 'homecoming' challenges the previously gained greater freedoms in refugee camps? How are 'new' gendered aspirations and ideas about being a woman

or a man practiced in the context of family reunification with those who had stayed behind? What are the consequences of these new gender identities and practices (through marriage process) that the returnees bring for the wider post-war *cieng nuära*? First, I discuss the interconnectedness of gender identities and marriage with the notion of household and *cieng*. I then turn to how the process of settling-in for returnees was intertwined with becoming a Nuer man or woman. Next, I focus on the gendered and gendering interconnectedness between settling-in, creating ones own household and marriage. Lastly, I address the emerging new concepts of masculinities and femininities as a result of war, displacement and 'return' and the (re)negotiations of gender relations within marriage institution in post-war Nuerland.

This chapter extends debates on gendered emplacement by focusing on the impact of these processes on gender relations. It analyses how certain returnee women and men, adults and youth, push the boundaries of 'acceptable and proper' gender behaviour, showing the fluidity of gender boundaries and contributing, at times, to transformations in gender identities, norms and institutions. I draw on one of the recent literature examining the role of 'vagabond' and 'wicked' women in contesting and (re)negotiating some gender relations of power in Africa (see Hodgson and McCurdy 2001). Hodgson and McCurdy demonstrate how terms such as 'vagabond', 'prostitute', 'wayward', 'unruly', 'indecent' and 'immoral' were used to "label and stigmatise women whose behaviour in some way threatens other people's expectations of 'the way things ought to be'" (2001: 1). In the case of Nuer returnee women and girls, and sometime young men, they were often perceived as 'loose', 'bad', 'behaving like a man (for women) or a woman (for men)' by those who had stayed behind or migrated to northern Sudan during the wars. Contestation around what constitutes 'proper' gender identity and behaviour and how processes of *beben cieng* ('homecoming') and *nyuuri piny* by creating a household (*cieng*) through marriage are part of 'becoming' a 'real Nuer man/woman' while, at the same time, question the permeability of these gender boundaries are the focus of this chapter. I hereby extend the debates around social aspects of emplacement as practiced within the landscape of gender relations and analyse the impact of these process on the transforming gender relations. I argue that what emerges is a state of 'in-flux' of gender norms, ideologies and institutions partially instigated by the returning population that characterise the contemporary post-war Nuer communities.

2. GENDER IDENTITIES, IDEOLOGIES AND 'SELF' IN FLUX: THE EXPERIENCE OF 'HOMECOMING' AND SETTLING-IN

> People call us lost women [and men], because we have been away from here for a long time and we don't know Nuer culture. We know nothing and we don't fit in here. We are really lost.

This is how Nyayena, a twenty-something year old mother who had spent most of her life in Khartoum, Kakuma and Nairobi, described 'homecoming' to Ler. Her feeling of 'being lost' reflected that of Kuem, the young groom bewildered by unfamiliarity with local marriage customs. Being 'lost' no longer related only to the experiences of young boys forcibly recruited by the SPLA in the 1980s (see chapter 5), but more widely connoted tensions around identity and self facing those who had grown up in displacement. It reflected the feeling of being detached from the 'local' cultural practices due to social uprootedness caused by displacement. In order to be "known and settled", in the words of Jany, a young returnee man, the process of *beben cieng* and *nyuuri piny* involved "learning how to be a Nuer man and getting to know the Nuer culture". Young returnee women and girls similarly referred to their challenges of settling-in. Hence, gendered emplacement involved (re)creation of gendered community relations, identities and practices. At times, this meant (re)negotiation of self, gender identities, aspirations and practices. These processes questioned some of the assumptions about gender ideologies and institutions, problematised 'timeless' discourses around *cieng nuära* and produced a state of in-flux of gender and community relations. I develop this point by focusing predominantly on the experiences of young men and girls/young women.

2.1. Landscape, place, home and gender identities

How are masculinities and femininities intertwined socially and how do *beben cieng* and place-making become part of redefinition of gender relations? Creating ones own household, *cieng*, through marriage is a critical point for Nuer femininities and masculinities. Here, I elaborate on the meaning of *cieng*, and home, as a site of a household.

A 23-year old single man from Bentiu who was a refugee in Kakuma described *cieng* as "*a place of living. If I get married, I will say that I have a home, cieng. Home means also family, a unit."* For young men, *cieng* meant the start of ones own household and becoming a mature and responsible man. Girls and women, however, referred to two ideas of *cieng* each representing different stage in their passage to adulthood. Nyayena, a young returnee woman, explained*:* "*Cieng, home, is a place where I was born. This is when I was a girl in my father's home. Now, I am married, I am ciek* [woman] *and I am in my own home, in my husband's cieng.*" Through marriage, transfer to husband's house and subsequent procreation, a girl (*nyal*) becomes a woman (*ciek*), gains rights to property in the house and ability to control domestic work and resources through her own cultivation (see chapter 4).

Thus *cieng* for the Nuer is a gendered space and is experienced differently through the performance and realisation of masculinities and femininities. The underlying gender ideology embedded in the creation of *cieng* through marriage influences the different social construction of women and men, girls and boys within the 'home' and 'household' space. The visual and lived representation of this difference is practiced in separate spheres of life within the household, whereby men and boys sleep traditionally together with the animals in a barn, *luak,* whereas women, girls and smaller children live in a house, *duël* (Evans-Pritchard 1941; Hutchinson 1980). Their different spatial and social positions determine their responsibilities and status in the household and the society at large, decision-making, access to resources and entitlements (*cuong* – rights). Formation of an own household through marriage and procreation relates to the passage to full adulthood. Through shared division of responsibilities and procreation, the identities of men and women are socially intertwined and likewise, their identities are interwoven with *cieng*.

Cieng as a space of household is also seen as a place of power relations embedded in gender and generational ideology. As Moore points out, marriage "links the formal system of social control and reproduction with the means by which command over resources and reproduction is achieved" (1996: 65). Marriage and *cieng* therefore are not only sites of reproduction, but also interpersonal relations. Kandiyoti (1988) identifies two ideal-typical types of male dominance: one found in the Middle East, South Asia and East Asia and another in sub-Saharan Africa. Kabeer (1994) describes

these models as corporate and segmented households, respectively. Corporate patriarchal households "are more likely to generate material pressures – and incentives," as Kabeer argues, "for women to acquiesce, however reluctantly, in a centralized decision-making process. […] Conversely, segmentation of the household economy and a more dispersed distribution of intra-household resources tends to be associated with greater access by women to resources within the household and to extra-household resources" (1994: 127).

The Nuer form of household is similar to the segmented model where women exercise relative autonomy in resisting male appropriation of their labour. Hutchinson (1980, 1996) discusses extensively the cattle-over-blood ideology which defined and dominated relations of power and authority between the sexes and among various age groups, including dominance of senior over junior men. Until the 1980s, this ideology was dominant, and had powerful consequences for the division of rights and responsibilities at home and in the community. Men's privilege and women's subordination were (and continue to be) linked to cattle-based bridewealth payments and the locality (usually patrilocal)[183] where girls as married women entered the territory of the men and their families. By giving birth women secured rights in property and long-term autonomy from their husbands. Through bridewealth men gained entitlements over their wives' sexuality, productive and reproductive labour and secured paternity rights over their children (see chapter 4; Hutchinson 1990, 1996; McKinnon 2000). Through their reproductive powers and access to economic activity, women were able to exercise some autonomy. Through having her own garden, women produced their own food in addition to providing labour for large plots owned by their husbands. Other African examples provided by Kandiyoti testify to women's overt resistance to male domination through economic autonomy, which decreases their vulnerability to male power (1988: 275-78).

As Hutchinson shows, in the early 1980s although the cattle-over-blood paradigm was still in place, it was being rapidly undermined by the emergence of new categories such as cattle-of-money and money-of-work. In this way, the ability of the senior men to maintain power through control over cattle wealth was being reduced (1996: 203-204).

[183] See McKinnon (2000) for further discussion.

With the emergence of *yiou* (money) and alternative ways of acquiring wealth through paid work, youth was gaining greater control. Wars and displacement brought new challenges to the gender ideology underlying the Nuer household relations. Access to education, Christianisation and awareness of human rights and gender equality in Kakuma were bringing new interpretations of social positions of women and men within the space of 'home' and the wider society (see below and section 3). Return to Nuerland meant a confrontation between diverse rights discourses.

This confrontation was also an integral part of the gendered emplacement process, or as Hammond argues, "the interworking of place, identity, and practice in such a way as to generate a relations of belonging between person and place" (2004a: 83). In particular, the processes of gendered emplacement were linked to the emerging landscape of community's self-conception. I follow Hammond's definition of *landscape* to refer to "the collection of meanings associated with the place that are produced through both interaction with that place in everyday practice and reflection on that place through imagination, visualization, narration, performance, and even policy formulation" (2004a: 82). I find Nordstrom's citation of Watts (1992: 122) useful whereby "Landscapes are ways of seeing – seeing not only outward to culturally constructed realities, but inward to ideas and ideals of self and identity" (1997: 179). In what follows, I analyse the gendered notions and experiences of landscapes and emphasise the diversity and the uniqueness of these experiences as perceived by returnee women and men. Gendered emplacement in this context is best understood as an ongoing process of creating and reconfiguring the web of social relations that constitute a community and finding one own's place within a place. Hence, transformation of gender identities and gender institution of marriage within the context of Nuerland are part and parcel of the social dimension of emplacement.

2.2. Becoming *wur nuära*

Tut narrated how a young returnee man absent from Ler for 20 years came:

> … from Kakuma with his [education] diplomas and wanted to marry a village girl. When he went to a *buul* [dance], he didn't know how to use a spear and how to dance. The village girls were making fun of him that he was really still *dhool* [boy] and that he should not be flirting with them. When he approached one of them and asked her to marry him, she rejected him because he did not have *gaar* [initiation scarification]. The man was so desperate that he got *gaar* in order to marry the girl.

> We, the returnee men, despite our years and education, are perceived as boys or as women here.

This narrative reflects the dilemmas of young men returning to their *cieng* (community) after years or decades of absence who were often referred to by 'stayees' as *dholi* (boys). Due to their lack of *gaar* and their inability to use *mut* (spears) and take part in *buul*, they were ridiculed by local girls and young men as not fully men. Although this attitude was more common in rural areas, young returnee men often felt that their war-time migration and Kakuma routes to manhood were not fully recognised by 'stayees'. Although participation in military struggle was praised, especially by government and army officials, it was less impressive for local young women, prospective marriage partners. Education did not guarantee entrance to full adulthood, especially in the eyes of those residing in rural areas. These different war trajectories and years of separation often led to lack of mutual understanding.

Son of a local politician, Jany, a 27-year old cousin of Kuem, had spent most of his life in Khartoum and Kenya. In the mid-1990s, his father transferred his family from Khartoum to Kenya to gain better education and security. Jany grew up in Nairobi and Kitale, attending Kenyan boarding schools and receiving a diploma in social development. He came back to Bentiu in 2006:

> When I first came I did not understand these people. I never really lived here and I did not know *cieng nuära* [Nuer culture], although I am a Nuer. But by being here and observing, I have learned slowly. As a returnee you bring a different culture with you. In order to be accepted, you have to learn the culture and behaviour of those who are here. Otherwise, you will be lonely and isolated.
>
> There are certain things that I still find weird, like for example the need to greet people every time you see them even though you have greeted them a few minutes earlier. Also the dressing style. Here, men wear a t-shirt under their shirts. When I tell them that this is far too hot and that it is not practical, they see me as someone who is dressing badly. So you have to adapt if you want to have friends here. I am slowly forgetting Kenya and the culture of Kenya. It is becoming blurred now.
>
> I haven't married yet, because I do not like the way people marry here. Also I do not understand it. I can't marry someone whom I have seen on the street and whom I don't know. But this is what people do here. They see a girl on the street, they admire her appearance, and then they ask her to marry them. If I do not know the girl and her behaviour how can I marry her?
>
> When you come back here, your father tells you how you should treat your wife. He tells you that you have to beat your wife and you should not even be talking to her, because she is really not there to be with you. She is there to produce children and to

> serve your family. When your father tells you these things repeatedly, you slowly change the attitude towards women. I have seen some of my friends who were also in Kenya and got educated, they are marrying local girls and then beating them even when they are pregnant. When I asked one of them why he was beating his wife, he told me that she had made mistakes and that she needs to be punished. If you do not beat the wife, she will not respect you and not serve you well. This is also one of the reasons why I have not married yet.
>
> […]I have to first learn this culture and then I can marry. I am still not full of this culture. In Kakuma, people were free and they did what they wanted to do. They were not controlled by their families and relatives, because they were not there. I have been slowly adapting to this culture. I have been slowly learning this place. But you have to behave the way the people are behaving here, because if you are different, no one will respect you. They will see you as different.

Jany's narrative illustrates the dilemmas of cultural adjustment for youth and the gendered and social aspects of emplacement, learning 'local' social relations and '(re)gaining a Nuer identity' by meeting expectations associated with being a *wur nuära* ('respectable Nuer man'). For Kuem, wearing *tuac* and learning how to use a spear, were steps towards becoming a real Nuer man during the wedding ceremony. Becoming *wur nuära* meant learning the 'proper' manners, dress-code, attitudes towards elders and women, and how to treat wives. The process of social emplacement implied also a reversal of gender ideologies, and especially views on the treatment of women, from those learned in exile, in Kakuma, to those accepted and valued in *cieng nuära*, in Ler. The confrontation between the 'modern Nuer masculinities' with the militarised and *cieng nuära* forms resulted in reshaping of masculinities concepts. Jany and other young men constructed their landscape by implicating themselves in a physical place through everyday reshaping and practice expressed through gendered selves.

Kim Jial, one of the 'lost boys' (introduced in chapter 5), got a job with UNICEF in Bentiu. He complained about post-return family pressures:

> As a Nuer you cannot refuse to support [the family]. If you refuse, others will see you as a selfish person and they will abuse you and tell you 'you are bad'. You cannot lose the support of your community and the pressure to assist all is huge. Everybody wants support but no one is willing to work. Also, when you give them something, no one tells you 'thank you'. Next day people come back and ask for more and you never see the result of your support. They just eat the money. It is not easy to balance the expectations of the community and one's own position. People here think that if you work for one of the UN agencies you have a lot of money. They do not understand that money is earned by working hard. They think it just comes like this. When they are lying on their beds and sleeping, I have to run

> around and sweat a lot in order to earn money. The people here have no concept of hard work. […] Here in Nuerland, it is very difficult to be rich. If you have something, you have to share with all. Especially as the oldest son, you have a responsibility [to support family members]. The social pressure is very strong, and this is the reason that some Nuer do not come back. I have been here for over a year now, but it is very difficult to live here among the people.

One of Kim's friends from Kakuma, a 28-year old 'lost boy', added:

> When I came back home after 17 years of not seeing my parents, I experienced several culture clashes. First, they wanted to marry a wife for me. Second, when I chose a girl from Eastern Nuerland my family rejected her because she was from a different clan. This was a shock to me because in Kakuma we were all mixed, from all tribes and all nationalities. The third cultural clash was the support that my family expected from me. This was difficult to understand for the family that I am unable to support all but finally they accepted. We are different I have spent years outside and have learned different culture. Now it is difficult for me to be here. I am like a stranger. I have to learn my place again.

Settling-in involved movement from a multi-cultural place to a homogenous place yet differentiated by diverse experiences due to wars and displacement. It also required re-evaluation of the Kakuma gender equality ideas to which young men had been exposed in Kenya (see chapter 6). It demanded following *cieng nuära* rules to be accepted as a fully respectable member of society, because otherwise they were seen as 'bed children'. Personal aspirations of returnee young men often clashed with the expectations of stay-put relatives. They were expected to take on the roles of 'elders' be responsible for family well-being. They thus experienced a shift from Kakuma freedom from Nuer male social obligations (see chapter 6) to subjection to household responsibilities and controls in Nuerland. This was part of becoming a Nuer adult man. The process of emplacing oneself for young men did not only indicate a passage to manhood but also challenged previously learned and practiced concepts of alternative masculinities. "To become a real Nuer man" was linked to the (re)casting of identity politics, (re)interpreting 'old' and 'new' norms of the Nuer landscape of communal and personal identity.

Their 'modern' more self-oriented views on life acquired in Kakuma were tested by the communitarian basis of Nuer manhood (chapter 4). To pass the test of full manhood, returnee youth needed to meet obligations through supporting the family. They often felt overwhelmed by these expectations and felt exploited, misunderstood and lonely. Although family networks act as a buffer against socio-economic uncertainty, a source of solidarity and security (see chapter 7), they can also bring about inequalities by

exercising pressure to conform to gender and generational household obligations. Amid the changes wrought by Kakuma and post-return economic hardship, family ties were being challenged by the strengthening of individual choices of returnees that were incompatible with Nuer household norms. In other words, individual choices were produced due to different war-time trajectories whereby displaced individuals embrace multiple cultural reference, thus, revealing strong individual aspirations different from those who had stayed behind.

Being a 'respectable Nuer man' also required constraining relations with girls. Wanten, a 'lost boy', explained:

> [In Kakuma], we used to do a lot of things together. Here, it is more difficult to meet girls. If you want to do it, you have to do it in secret, so that her parents don't know. If they see you with her, they will think you want to marry her. Here, boys and girls are not supposed to be seen together in the same places, unless they are related.

In Kakuma, boys and girls, were used to interacting extensively in social places, including school, sports and church. In Nuerland, however, gender segregation of spaces is much stricter. Especially when young girls and men reach marriageable age, they are not supposed to interact with each other. Adjustment also related to activities and tasks that were perceived as 'female', including cooking, fetching water and washing, which many men had performed in Kakuma. This raised tensions between 'local' and 'Kakuma-practiced' concepts of masculinity. Gatmai, a returnee man in his late twenties explained:

> They [the people who stayed behind] see us as women, because we don't do men's work. We don't know how to build a house, we don't take care of the cattle, and we have no cattle in fact. Also, we don't know how to do things that they [men in the village] do. We don't know how to fight with spears. They make fun of us and say that the work that we are doing here is not a real work; that we are like women.

Although some, like Kuok and Gatmai, tried to do domestic work, they were often confronted by local women and girls. "*This is our task and our responsibility. As a man, you cannot do it or otherwise people will think badly about us, the women,*" Nyalada, the aunt of Kuok who had stayed in Ler, told him. Other young men commented that their sisters, mothers and other women and girls often challenged them, when they were caught doing domestic chores. "*Get yourself a wife!*" they would shout. Some of the young men decided to marry to avoid ridicule (see section 3).

This is an example of how change is often resisted and 'gender equity' seen as an aberration of 'appropriate gender behaviour' and a 'transgression of gender spaces' and is often challenged by women themselves. It demonstrates the dilemmas of young returnee men trying to live 'new selves' in a context where 'new' (greater gender equality) is not valued. The processes of social emplacement resulted in a confrontation of diverse gender ideologies, gender identities and norms. What emerges is a state of in-flux and transformation of social and in particular gender relations that constitute a community. For the returnees and stayees to construct a common and shared landscape of social relations and norms they needed to (re)evaluate their and competing diverse (gendered) values. While those men and women who were displaced to Kakuma learned about gender equality and women rights, those who had stayed behind perceived such rhetorics as threatening to what they believed were the core social principles of the Nuer community (*cieng nuära*). To become part of the community, and hence emplaced and settled in, some young men felt obliged to shed their Kakuma acquired views.

For the stayee women (and men), gender equality and 'new' gender division of labour represented unfamiliar discourses. Some (stayee) women and girls actively maintained male prestige and dominance by not allowing men to perform female-inscribed duties. 'Being like a woman' meant loss of prestige for men. For their sisters and wives, especially those who had stayed behind, men taking over female domestic tasks threatened to diminish their own social standing. This corresponds to the observation put forward by Ortner and Whitehead that "the sphere of social activity predominantly associated with males encompasses the spheres predominantly associated with females and is, for that reason, culturally accorded higher value" (1981: 8). For some Nuer women and men, this is usually represented in the division of gendered spaces within the household, where the kitchen is reserved for women while the courtyard is men's meeting and decision-making place. Contestations over this gendered division of space between stayees and returnees meant (re)interpreting and forging the landscape of social norms and interactions that defined the community. They also reveal how alternative masculinities were being challenged and reschaped as a result of emplacement practice and process.

'Being different, isolated', 'feeling like a stranger' and 'not fitting culturally' were terms often used by young men to describe their initial feeling of 'homecoming'. However, through settling-in and 'learning the place', come young men were slowly re-evaluating their views on manhood and masculinity, and partially conforming to the 'local' social relations. A few decided to follow local customs and took part in local spear fighting. Others, including Kuem, married local girls to gain prestige and 'local roots'. Some adjusted their dress-code, manners and attitudes towards young women by showing dominance through beating them and imposing burdensome domestic chores. "*We, the Nuer* [men], *we cheat women. When we are away from home, we cook and do all the domestic work. But when the women are around, we make them do all the work and we say it is shameful for us as men to enter the kitchen*," commented Kuok, my research assistant, on the changed behaviour of some of his male friends from Kakuma. Some men decided to conceal their domestic work to avoid being ridiculed by other men and women. Others, despite their initial vowed commitment to monogamous marriages and Kakuma gender-equality, decided to marry second wives. When in 2010 I learned that Thudan, a 'lost boy' working for an NGO in Ler married for the second time, I inquired what happened to his gender equality beliefs. He told me: "*Oh that, I left it* [them] *with LWF in Kakuma."*

Another set of opportunities and challenges in terms of practice of masculinities emerges for those men who were in Kakuma for a short time and defied the culture of human rights and gender equality promoted by the international organisations. Most of them felt happy to be back in Nuerland. They gladly abandoned the 'female' domestic tasks which lack of sisters and mothers had necessitated in the camp. On return to Nuerland, they immediately called on long-lost sisters, mothers and female cousins to perform these duties. Likewise, for older married men, settling-in and emplacement implied re-gaining their masculinity and manhood, severely undermined by food aid in Kakuma. Mentioned in chapter 6, Dak, a father of two, described his experience of returning to Ler after six years of absence:

> Before I went to Kakuma, I was a *kuäar* [leader]: I was a soldier, had my land and my wife and was able to assist them. In Kakuma, I became like a child, in need of constant assistance from the UN. When peace came to Sudan, I decided to come back, because I needed to establish myself. In Kenya, you are in a foreign land and you have no rights. Here, you are at home, *nyuuri piny* [settled]. The process of establishing yourself takes along time, but you will be the one in charge of feeding

> your children. It is not only building your house, it is about your whole life. It is about control over your environment, becoming a real *wur nuära* again, independent and in control of your future.

Being in control over the household, resources, being self-sufficient and able to provide for a family were important steps in regaining manhood for those men who felt emasculated due to wars and displacement. In the camp their manhood, masculinity and rights were challenged by dependence on aid and more directly by human rights and pro-women policies propagated by international organisations. Through getting access to resources, land and livelihoods, as discussed in the preceding, these men were gaining control over their lives. Dak's brother, Jal, also a returnee from Kakuma, like a few other returnee married a second (local) wife. This was a sign of prestige and 'being a real Nuer man', as he argued: "*When you have many wives and children, you are considered wur bume* [powerful/strong man]. *We, the Nuer* [men], *need many wives to have many children* [so that] *we can be famous.*" 'Being a real Nuer man' meant exercising power over women and their children. I witnessed several cases of returnee men becoming more abusive towards their wives, often beating them and forcing to do more domestic work, thus re-creating their war and displacement thwarted masculinities (cf. Moore 1994).

Gendered emplacement after 'return' entailed for returnee men (re)consideration of the landscape of social relations and especially gender identities. This involved confrontation, re-negotiation and adaptation to ideals of local masculinity. These contestations were linked to the ideas of 'selfhood' as aspired, imagined, expressed and practiced differently by those who were displaced and those who stayed behind. For young (single) men, return to Nuerland was associated with becoming 'responsible' by assuming family and community obligations. While war-time migration and experiences in displacement were perceived by young men as a route to male adulthood it was only through return to *cieng* that the young men were able to fully become *wutni nuäri* (Nuer men). While some returnee men tried to challenge local notions of male domination by attempting to introduce more pro-women and gender-equity ideas, others, like men returnees to Guatemala (Nord and Simmons 1999a; Crosdy 1999), found 'homecoming' an opportunity to (re)impose their power over women.

These mixed practices show how differentiated and personal the process of emplacement is. What emerges from these different emplacement strategies and experiences is a certain degree of dissonance. They also show that the practice of gender identities and relations is contingent on a place. While 'new modern masculinities' were valued and practiced (even if in a limited manner) in Kakuma, post-return emplacement in Ler required (re)evaluation of these identities and norms. This finding reveals that changing gender relations and identities and women's empowerment are not linear processes. The different pressures that each of the places poses for both women and men show that the cultural milieu in which gender identities and relations are practiced and negotiated are relevant to the shape of these relations. While progress towards greater gender equality is possible in one place, the move to another cultural setting characterised by significant gender discrepancies does not guarantee that more equal gender identities and relations will be immediately transplanted. The dynamism and dynamics of returnee men and their different strategies of gendered emplacement show the transiting of gendered identities that takes place in the movement between places in which these identities are shaped.[184]

2.3. Becoming *nyal/ciek nuära*

Gladis, a 17-year old daughter of a local commander spent 15 years in Kenya and came back to Ler in April 2006. When I ran into her at a water pump, she recounted how:

> When I arrived in Ler, I thought I would not survive here. Most of my life, I spent in Kenya and didn't know the life in the [Nuer] village. I didn't know how people were behaving and what I was supposed to do as a girl. I spent all my life in schools and had no idea about the responsibilities of a Nuer girl. At the beginning I refused to do anything, but then I realised that I could only survive if I learned the life of the village. I slowly learned how to carry water on my head, look at me, I am a professional now! I learned how to make traditional foods such as *walwal*, *kisra*, *akop*; how to grind sorghum on a stone and how to serve people. At first, I didn't even enjoy the local food, I didn't like the taste. I missed *chapatti* [Kenyan corn flatbread]. After a while I adjusted and now my life has become much better. The one problem that I had was lack of job. I had nothing to do apart from the work at home, because despite being an educated girl it is difficult to find work here. People don't want you to work outside the house. There is no freedom for girls here, and girls are valued only when they are married and bring bridewealth.

[184] I would like to thank Prof. Andrea Cornwall for drawing my attention to this interpretation.

For long-displaced girls coming 'home' to Nuerland was a fundamental challenge. They had to learn to (re)negotiate their greater space and freedoms gained in displacement. The process of "learning to be a *nyal nuära* (Nuer girl)" required following what 'the locals do' and becoming acquainted with local customs, obligations and the responsibilities considered female in *cieng nuära.* Young women between the age of 14 and 20 who were born in exile or had spent most of their lives displaced found it hardest to settle-in. Like Gladis and my other Kakuma girlfriends, they were perceived and saw themselves as different, mostly educated, single and more liberal in their behaviour and attitudes than those who stayed behind. They knew they were 'different' from their local age-mates, who were mostly illiterate, married and conservatively segregated. As discussed in chapter 4, within Nuer gender ideology, girls are constructed differently within the space of 'home' and household with specific obligations, limited freedoms assigned and socialised subordination to male relatives. As we have seen (chapter 6), in Kakuma, some of these rules were relaxed due to human rights and gender programming, access of girls to education and distance from 'home' and *cieng nuära*. For displaced girls, 'homecoming' meant confrontation with strict interpretations of what constitutes 'good, obedient and respectable' behaviour for Nuer girls and thus, reshaping the modern concepts of Kakuma acquired femininities.

Figure 19. 'New' Nuer young women, Ler 2007.

Returnee girls, especially those from East Africa, were visible on the dirt roads of Ler. They wore tight trousers and mini-skirts, had colourful hair extensions, played sport with boys and young men, conversed freely with male friends, moved around the village and often travelled by themselves to far away places (see figure 19). They also had little idea how to milk cows, make traditional foods or grind sorghum. In Kakuma, the staple food was different and was provided by the UN, usually pre-ground. Returnee girls further stood out as they were the only girls in higher grades as other local girls of their age had either not gone to school or had been married.

The behaviour of returnee girls or young women was often frowned upon. The comment of my host, who had stayed most of her life in Ler, reflected this:

> Look at Nyariek [a returnee girl from Kakuma], she thinks she is a man. She is not behaving like a good girl. *Jen wa loorä* [she roams loose], wears bad clothes and talks with men. My daughter, Nyamuc, she is a good girl. She stays at home, does

> the [domestic] work, does not go out unless to fetch water or charcoal and does not socialise with boys. She shows *pöc* [respect/fear]. These Kakuma girls are *jiäke* [bad]!

Comments about the 'inappropriate' behaviour of Kakuma girls were common in daily conversations with my neighbours and guest who felt they were introducing value-threatening 'foreign' culture and bringing shame upon their families. Returnee girls were often most ostracised, policed and regarded with disdain by those who had stayed behind. In her study among northern Sudanese communities in Cairo, Anita Fábos (2008) used the concept of propriety, *adab*, to describe moral conventions among Sudanese migrants. For them to be a real Sudanese meant to subscribe to certain moral, ethical and aesthetic values, to have *adab*. For the local Nuer women in Ler, confining to their interpretation of *adab* meant being able to acquire the reputation of a *nyal nuära goa* (good Nuer girl). Through expressing *pöc* (shyness/respect) and *dual* (fear), such girls and young women gain respect, status and enhanced marriage prospects.

Gendered emplacement signified adjustment and narrowing of freedoms and rights enjoyed in Kakuma. In chapter 1 we saw how moral panic was caused by returnee girls' mini-skirts and trousers'. The Ler commissioner outlawed them, calling on girls to behave 'morally'. References to 'morality' and bringing 'bad social behaviour' (*cieng jiäke*) were common during both Catholic and Presbyterian church services. Some of my Kakuma friends were beaten up and arrested by local police for wearing shorter skirts. I often witnessed local men and women scuffing at girls' clothing. Some of the more conservative approaches to dress-code resulted from Arabisation and cultural adaptation during displacement to Khartoum. Women in such households wore Arab dresses with a head to toe *tob* (wrap) and head-cover.

Hodgson and McCurdy describe how women are labelled 'bad' or 'loose' because "they disrupt the web of social relations that define and depend on them as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and lovers" (2001: 6). The conversations with elders confirmed that early socialisation was a vital component in the creation of the ideal girl/wife. The values of respect for and obedience to their fathers, brothers and later husbands were instilled in girls from an early age. Girls, like Nyamuc, were labelled *nyal ma gua* (good girl) when they maintained their subordinate position, respecting male authority. Like Tutsi and Ha women studied by Lovett in western Tanzania, Nuer girls and

women "learned that their subordination was a life-long condition" (2001: 53). They demonstrated respect through carrying out their domestic duties, not speaking back to their fathers and husbands, agreeing to marriages arranged by their fathers (and mothers) and not 'roaming around freely'. When Nyariek and other returnee girls challenge the criteria of 'respectability' they confront patriarchal configuration of gender, "the norms of "appropriate" gender roles, relations, responsibilities, and behaviour" (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001: 6). Passed on through internalisation and socialisation, bestowed through references to 'our culture' and 'tradition', these gendered norms become sources and thresholds of local moral and social orders. When Nuer women overstep these gendered boundaries, they threaten the community's moral foundations. This is specially feared by those, men and some (mostly stayee) women, who have most to lose when norms are changed. These acts of 'transgression' also demonstrate the ability and the willingness of girls and young women to challenge 'local' concepts of subordinate femininities and patriarchal prerogative. Through their agency seen in small acts of resistance, they contest gender norms, identities and relations that defined *cieng nuära*. These acts are also steps towards transforming gender relations in the process of creating a (new) meaning of the community's landscape.

Another area of adjustment for returnee girls involved their awareness and exercise of freedoms acquired through human rights and gender promotion programmes in Kakuma. Most greatly regretted lack of freedoms in Nuerland. The constraints were recognised by male relatives and other returnee men. Amaring, Nyariek's younger brother, reflected the views of many such men:

> Girls here have no rights and no freedom. They are punished for wearing trousers and mini-skirts, not allowed to play sports and don't go to school. Their only right here is to get married and do domestic work. They are very tired as they are overworked. It is hard for my sister and others like her who were in Kenya. They are not used to this.

Despite commitment to gender equality in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the interim constitution of the southern Sudanese government, local customary practice prevailed. For example, girls were not expected and allowed to speak for themselves. This became apparent during a court session when a returnee young woman attempted to speak during a divorce case. She was rebuked by a male chief:

"*You are a girl, you have no right to talk here. It is your father who will decide; nyeri thiele wec* [girls have no brains]." This was one of the many reminders for 'modern educated empowered Kakuma girls' that in Nuerland their social status was different. Caught between 'tradition' and 'modernity', yet being aware of their legal rights required painful re-adjustment to a more inferior gender status after return.

Nyakuol, a returnee widow introduced in chapter 1, complained that:

> Here in Ler, life for women is different [than in Kakuma]; there is no human rights [for women]. When you disagree with your husband, he will just beat you and even if you complain to the court or the police, they will laugh at you. Your neighbour, Nyakuma, complained about her cousin beating her, and the police wanted to put her in jail. These people here are still [backwards]. They have no idea how to treat women. They say they give us 25% [representation according to CPA], but in fact, they are the ones who always talk in meetings. There are no women in the Ler administration, and the ones that are there, are wives of commanders and big people. When they give a woman a job, they just want you to do domestic work, like serving food, cooking, washing and sweeping compound. The life for us women here is more difficult, because we learned in Kakuma that as humans we have rights and we are equal but here, the women are still behind. For the girls it is hard, because they were free in Kakuma to attend school, to participate in the community, but here, they are just expected to cook and do the domestic chores.

Women and girls born in exile or displaced for long periods experienced 'return' and settling-in as a loss of freedom and rights. They often reminisced about their lives in Kakuma, rights to education, greater freedoms to move around and interaction with other girls and boys and reduced domestic obligations: "*In Kakuma, our brothers used to cook and help us with domestic work. But here, they say that they are men, and they cannot go to the kitchen*," commented Gladis. They also enjoyed greater freedom to choose boy-friends and husbands. *Beben cieng* meant stricter community and family obligations and responsibilities, subordination and undermining of newly gained privileges.

Gendered emplacement for displaced Nuer girls and women implied (re)negotiation, adaptation and contestation of gender norms, identities and self in the context of diversification of gender identities produced as a result of varied experiences during wars. The 'modern' femininities and characteristics of womanhood acquired in Kakuma – access to education, scope for inter-gender socialisation, freedoms of movement and dress, decision-making, leadership and participation in community activities - were (re)negotiated with those who had stayed behind or been displaced to

Khartoum. Similarly to the experiences of emplacement by young returnee men, the process of adjustment and confrontation of different (gender) values held by returnee women and girls from those of stayees demonstrates that gender identities and relations are shaped and reshaped within a place. Through their emplacement practice, returnee women and girls were bringing different concepts of femininities and gender norms. Through the everyday practice and negotiation between returnees and stayees, social and gender norms were being reinterpreted and (re)evaluated. Although 'running to the UN' and 'running loose' that women practiced in Kakuma were no longer available to them in Ler, their small yet active contestation of norms sets gender relations in flux. Thus, gendered community formation in the process of emplacement offers an opportunity to (re)define the landscape of social and gender relations of *cieng nuära*. This was also visible in the changing practices of marriage process.

3. SETTLING-IN AND MARRIAGE

By March, when the rains started arriving in Ler, and when cattle and youth returned from *wec* (cattle camp), life concentrated around *cieng*. *Tot*, the rainy season, was also a time for new marriages to be negotiated and for *tuoc* (wedding dances). Marriage was on everybody's mind, with negotiations of bridewealth taking place in *luak* (cattle-byre), booking of girls, or taking girls 'home' to the husbands' households. Every night, I heard and saw dancing and singing crowds late into the night. I was repeatedly invited to celebrations as talk about marriages intensified among returnee young women and men. The latter were especially eager to build their own 'home'. In the words of Evans-Pritchard, a (Nuer) man "[…] cannot have a home without a wife" (1951: 92-3). This reflected the feelings of many young Kakuma men, who defined *nyuuri piny* as a long-term settling-in process. "*You need to first find your relatives, then you need to have a job, build your own house, and then* [you] *need to have cows and need to marry. This is when you will be established and settled*," commented Kuok, my returnee research assistant. The majority of single men and women who participated in the socio-economic survey described in chapter 7 identified the settling in process with the initiation of marriage, full passage to adulthood and household establishment. Marriages and starting of one's own household were linked to the (re)creation of social networks and forging of community bonds that were integral parts of making and finding one's place after return.

Hutchinson argues that marriage[185] for the Nuer, as in many societies, is "less a state of being than an extended process subject to competing interpretations and manipulations" (1990: 393). As mentioned earlier, it is a pivotal institution that determines gender ideology based on the cattle over blood complex and which regulates male dominance over women. It is also an institution that regulates kinship relations, handling of resources and inter-generational power structures. The different stages of marriage and transfer of cattle-based bridewealth payments progressively expand husbands' rights in their wives and children. They also maintain kinship-based management and transfer of resources, with kin contributing to the bridewealth payments and hence, building *cieng* (clan) alliances.

3.1. Young Men: marriage, choice and brides

"*You can only be a kuäar* [chief/leader] *if you have a wife and children and you are responsible for them. This is when you will be respected and given a position in the community*," argued my male friends. Marriage signified for young men (and girls) a route to adulthood, an independent household and improved social status and rights. Almost all single returnee men, whether those from Khartoum or East Africa, referred to marriage as part of their settling-in process. For young returnee men, unable for reasons outlined in chapter 6 to get married in Kakuma,[186] marriage was an important element of passage to manhood, forging community bonds and finding their own place within it. Most of those who arrived in Nuerland before 2006 were already married or 'in the process' when I settled in Ler. Those who arrived during my stay were 'running after cows' in order to initiate marriage process. The metaphor of 'running after cows' represents the efforts of prospective grooms to accumulate bridewealth. Since cattle-based marriages remained the rule in Western Upper Nile, young men had to mobilise family and kin (and other social networks as discussed in chapter 7) support to securing bridewealth. Despite increased monetisation of the Nuer economy (see chapter 7), and even though some of returnees had paid jobs, cattle remained the primary payment method. "*Marriage with money is not a marriage. Those who married with money in*

[185] For discussion of different marriage unions, see Gough (1971) and McKinnon (2000).
[186] These reasons included lack of resources – relatives and cattle - as well as high bridewealth, limited number of marriageable girls and high competition with those young men resettled in the west (see also Grabska 2010).

Khartoum, Kakuma and America will have to come here [to Nuerland] *to marry with cows. Only when women have cows on their back, the marriage is legal*," commented Kuong, Ler's chief. Young men often saved their monthly salaries and bought cattle in Ler. Cattle-of-money rather than cattle-of-blood was becoming dominant, a continuum of a change noticed by Hutchinson in the 1980s among the Western Leek Nuer (1996). The ritual significance of cattle acquired through bridewealth rather than money was diminishing. "*Yang e yang* [cows are cows]. *They have the same significance whether you got them through your work* [and money] *or through marriage*," commented a Ler elder. Cattle-based bridewealth were means of maintaining some of the norms that defined Nuer social identities vis-à-vis transforming post-war landscape of community's gender relations.

'Running after cows' often resulted in conflicts with relatives who had stayed put. As discussed in chapter 7, returnees were in need of land and cattle to be able to establish themselves, as many of them had lost all during displacement. Their return 'home', however, put pressure on war-impoverished households of stayees. A great number of young men were unable to either find relatives or retrieve their property. Jial, one of Kuok's friends from Ethiopia and Kenya, shared his sorrows:

> I was away for 19 years and I had no contact with my family who stayed in Sudan. When I came back in 2006, I learned that my father was dead and that he used all the cows [for his second marriage]. There was no property left; the land was taken by the government. Now, I am sitting on my cousin's land; and even my brothers could not get married due to lack of cattle. I had to start from zero. I will only be able to marry once I get some cows through my job.

Those who were unable to find relatives and retrieve property felt unsettled and often referred to themselves as 'returnees', unable to start preparing for marriage, a process that they perceived as essential to creating and becoming part of a community. Despite these challenges, marriage was being contracted by returnee young men for three main reasons. Some were finalising a process initiated in Kakuma; others were getting married under pressure to fulfil family obligations and some were eager to establish their own 'homes'.

Yak, who spent 12 years in Kakuma, after finishing the secondary school, came through UNHCR repatriation to Bentiu. He had left his wife and eight month-old baby in Nairobi:

> The reason for coming here is to finish the marriage process. In Kakuma, Angelina and I had a relationship, and when her brothers found out that she was pregnant, they imprisoned me. I told the court [Nuer court in Kakuma] that I wanted to marry Angelina, but that I had no money or cattle in Kakuma. After many negotiations with Angelina's father [who remained in Nuerland] over the radio call, they agreed to give me Angelina under the promise that I will pay the full bridewealth when I come to Sudan. Now, the first step is to meet with my father and to negotiate the cows with the father of Angelina. I will also have to get a job so I can buy some cattle and give them to my in-laws.

Due to the lack of *diel* (clan) relatives, physical distance to 'home' in Nuerland, as well as lack of cattle and the general impoverishment of refugees, official marriages with full payment of bridewelath were rare in Kakuma (see chapter 6). Most camp marriages were contracted against pledges to repay on return to Nuerland. A similar trend was identified by Christine Falge among Nuer refugees in Punido camp in Ethiopia (1997). Although some money transfer was usually necessary to the relatives in the camp, this was seen more as *pöth* (a gift for the bride's mother). This payment did not have to be returned to the family of the man in case of a divorce or failure to finalise the marriage. Bridewealth payment was still to be completed in cattle 'at home' in Nuerland, in addition to any money transfers in Kakuma. Thus, for many young men who had relationships in Kakuma and initiated marriages usually through 'illegal' ways of impregnating girls or taking them without a payment of bridewealth (i.e. 'stealing'), 'homecoming' meant an obligation to repay the 'loan'. This was a significant burden for impoverished returnees lacking physical capital. For Yak and other young men this obligation complicated and prolonged settling-in. Since his family wealth had been scattered by war he desperately looked for a well-paid job and then saved from his salary to acquire cattle, rather than invest in land or a house. Most such young men struggled to find resources to complete their marriages and some were forced by lack of cows to abandon their previous girlfriends.

Others experienced family pressure to marry upon their return. Kuok explained these generational clashes and dilemmas:

> If you are the oldest son, when you come back and reunite with the family, the family wants to marry you off. Young men become the responsible ones and are told

> that if they want to be seen as serious in the community they have to marry. Some might not accept it; maybe they have changed their attitude towards marriage. They know that they need to have a job in order to secure the future of the wife and children so that they live a good life and have something to eat. But the parents usually do not care about it. These men also might consider further education and if they get married this will prevent them from going away again.

For young men, *beben cieng* meant meeting family responsibilities and becoming part of the wider *diel* and *cieng* network of rights (*cuong*) and obligations. This included the initiation of marriage. Many of the young returnee men found themselves faced with a dilemma: although they wanted to continue education to be able to better establish themselves, their families expected them as the eldest sons to marry. [187] Thus, marriage was an essential part of forging community bonds and personal place-making process, at the expense of constraining one's own personal preferences.

Inter-generational tensions also arose around the choice of the brides. Kim, introduced in chapter 5, Kuok's friend and a 'lost boy' absent for 20 years, found himself on his return to Ler in 2006 trapped between the desire to be 'independent' and to 'be part of the family':

> When I came back, my father, who is an old man, told me that now it is time to marry. I still had my plans of pursuing my education and also I had my girlfriend in Kakuma. We met in school and used to study together. She then got resettled to Australia and is now at the university. We promised to marry each other. But when I came to Ler, my parents wanted me to marry a local girl. They need a local girl to understand each other. They don't want a town girl who is educated and who might not obey them. I insisted at the beginning that I marry a girl of my choice, and was thinking about my girlfriend. But now I am in a process of marrying a local wife. I don't know her, she is not educated, but my people told me that I will get to love her.
>
> They say in our culture, that the first wife is the family wife. She is married by the family – *ciek ciengdan* [wife of our family] because the whole family makes cattle contribution towards bridewealth. This means that she belongs to the family, except in bed, when she belongs only to you. She is also married for your mother, to assist her in the house. I decided to marry the first wife for my mother, and the second one, I will marry from my resources and she will be *my wife*. If my girlfriend in Australia agrees, she will be my second wife.

[187] Marriage among brothers is sequenced according to cattle rights determined by age. Cattle gained from the marriage of sisters is used by their brothers to marry wives and replenish the female reproductive potential of *cieng* due to the departure of their sisters to other households. The younger brothers have to wait their turn until elder brothers are married.

Kim's narrative reveals the competing values held by returnee young men and their stayee families with regards to concepts of masculinities, parents-sons relations and marriage. It also shows how shifting gender norms due to diverse experiences during the wars in culturally differentiated contexts. Kim's concerns also demonstrate the cometing sources of power enjoyed by returning sons and their stayee families. While returnee young men through their education might have changed their position of power vis-à-vis their elders, families' control over resources influenced young men's preferences. Reliance on family to meeting bridewealth obligations constrained young men in the choice of their brides. Nuer men, as polygamists, assign different responsibilities to different wives. Usually, the first wife is married to assist the husband's aging parents. A number of returnee married men coming from Khartoum, East Africa but also from the USA or Australia found upon their arrival 'home' parental obligations to marry a (local) second wife. Even those with university degrees and positions with international organisations or the Government of Southern Sudan were faced with 'living up' to the family expectations. An American Nuer male parliamentarian in Juba told me: "*Our Nuer culture is very strong, and we cannot go against it."* Despite the shifting landcape of social and gender relations, emplacement process was at times used as a justification for (re)establishing previous *status quo*.

Conforming to *cieng nuära* customs often clashed with the aspirations of young 'modern' Kakuma-educated men. Tensions around marriage were due to different experiences of family members during conflict and changed aspirations and ideas of manhood due to upbringing in Kakuma. Kakuma returnees were often baptised and educated while their parents continued the life of *cieng nuära* (village). This confrontation often expressed itself through the different views on marriage and the role and position of wives. Young Kakuma men often valued more equal partnerships, 'falling in love', kissing (*ciim*), expressing emotions and marrying a girl of their own choice with similar life experiences. Their parents, however, preferred someone whom they could understand and control often through physical punishment.

Inter-generational tensions around marriage were also due to management of resources. The elder generation bestowed on returning sons responsibility for handling resources and kinship relations. Through the payment of bridewealth, marriage was seen as a communal and family matter, rather than a personal one. Young Kakuma men with a

more individualised approach to family relations found that by their control over cattle their families obliged them to 'fit in'. Parents insisted on marriage in order to replenish and pass on family resources. "*Our son is back and now it is time for him to marry. The cows have been waiting for him*," was a typical comment, made by Kim's father who had stayed in Ler. Their references to 'strong Nuer culture' and 'inability to go against it' showed how young men were embroiled in the interplay between hegemonic structural constraints and individual agency (Gramsci 1971; Ortner 1996; Giddens 1987). Inter-generational and stayee-returnee debates around marriage as an institution of social control became sites of struggle in the context of greater economic and social transformations. Through access to paid employment young men were challenging the control of elders over marriage partners and time of marriage. Yet, although they aspired to a different 'life' and had goals that at times contradicted those of the elders, in the end such was the power of gender asymmetrical ideas embedded in marriage and the beguiling prospect of enhanced status as a 'responsible' man, that they went along with what was expected of them. Despite acts of resistance and returnee assertions of a different vision of gender relations dominant ideas of attainment of manhood through marriage resisted change. These findings reveal how change in gender relations is not a linear process and it is contingent on place, cultural milieu, political, economic and social conditions, resources available and people's own preferences and readiness to embrass it.

Eventually, marriage was on the mind of almost all young men. They had potentially better prospects of marrying in Nuerland due to access to family and clan networks and their property. In addition, the choice of girls was much greater than in Kakuma and as 'educated modern men' having access to jobs and money, returnees were seen as desirable husbands (see below). Some of the Kakuma men decided to marry girls whom they had known or befriended in the camp. Since the bridewealth payments for educated girls were much higher, they struggled to collect *yang* (cattle) and *yiou* (money) to purchase cattle for bridewealth. Often, as it was the case of Gatmai and Nyaberr, they resorted to eloping with the bride in order to force parents to agree to the marriage.

Most young men married local girls, either due to family pressures or by choice. Kakuma girls were often perceived as 'unruly', 'spoilt' and 'difficult to control'

because of their education and exposure to notions of gender equality. Young men often justified their decision to marry a local girl by blaming their parents. However, women saw it differently. Nyajung, a returnee married woman from Kakuma, explained:

> The educated men prefer to marry uneducated girls because it is easier to control them. Educated girl cannot be controlled by a man, because she has knowledge. She will not fear to go away [divorce] and take care of children [through a job]. The man will go away from uneducated girl for good and she will be left without any support.

Women pointed to education for girls as undermining the power and control of men over women and male fears of losing their position in the family and community. A group discussion with women and girls attending a maternity and health care education programme for midwives in Ler confirmed this. Women dismissed the arguments presented by returnee men that there is a lack of educated girls in Ler and that young men are pressured by the family to marry uneducated girls. One pointed out that: *"... if these men are educated, they could marry alone if they get a job and earn their own money. This should not be a problem."*

When a young returnee man tried to defend his position, a married stayee woman commented:

> This is really a question of power and control over an uneducated girl. Educated girls are more independent and if they are abused, they will complain and run away. They know that they can have their financial independence because they are educated and can get a job. The men prefer to marry an uneducated girl because if the wife is not following their orders they can beat her and she will not complain. Men fear being under the responsibility of the woman and they will fear being controlled [financially] by the educated wife. Also, educated girls will not accept being beaten and abused by the uneducated men.

Another young woman commented: "*The topic of girl's education is important because it is all about power*."

These comments point to the key question of power within social structures and relations. I use here the model of "serious games" proposed by Ortner to describe practice of social relations that embodies agency (1996: 12). Ortner argues that this reflects that

> social life as culturally organized and constructed, in terms of defining categories of actors, rules and goals of the games, ….; that social life is precisely social, consisting of webs of relationships and interaction between multiple, shiftingly interrelated

> subject relations, none of which can be extracted as autonomous "agents"; and yet at the same time there is "agency," that is, actors play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge, intelligence (1996: 12).

Power for Nuer women meant the ability to make decisions and own choices in life, and exercise control over one's self. Some were highly aware how they internalised their subordination and the ways by which they were dominated by men. However, they often acquiesce in these "serious games" in order to benefit from them. Yet, cattle-over-blood ideology was being further eroded through the autonomous ways of acquiring wealth and the increase in 'illegal' or 'run-away' marriages that both young women and men often resorted to. It was also being undermined through girls' access to education and their expanding autonomy from men (and cattle). 'Knowledge' stemming from formal education was identified as a new means of re-configuring household power relations. Access to knowledge gained through education was perceived by (some) women as a means of improving their strategic position vis-à-vis men (and other women) and improving their (domestic and communal) bargaining positions.

When I asked elders about the 'olden days' almost all responded that cows were more important than women, since they "married women". Men were more powerful than cows as they were in charge of cows and could marry women with them. These views remained dominant among some of the stayee population. When I similarly questioned returnee women and men, their responses were different. "*Women and men are equal now, we have something called human rights and this means that women and men are equal*, *because they are both human* [beings]," I was told by Gatmain, a young returnee man who had spent ten years in Kenya. "*Women and men are equal in front of God. It is only the lack of knowledge that makes us, women, dependent on men*," commented a married woman. Education was seen as an interlocking linkage in power sharing and distribution of power in gender relations of the Nuer. However, the disadvantage of women in accessing education further deepened their subordinate position. The educational gap was a source of further subjugation used by men who resisted more balanced gender relations. Some quoted the Bible as a source of 'male dominance', a new 'gender paradigm'. "*In Genesis II, it is said that a woman was made out of man's rib. Hence, man is superior over woman and he is in control of her*," said Paul, a university-educated returnee from Uganda. Some educated men were using

'knowledge' to improve their social position and gain greater power over both senior men (see chapter 7) and women. In the eyes of these men, educated girls and women were challenging the established power structures in the community and demanding a stronger and more equal position.

The contradictions in the behaviour, choices and strategies adopted by returnee men reveal that gender identities, ideas and relations are often strategically chosen and shaped. This points to the importance of the context and general political, economic and social environment in which power and gender hierarchies are defined and practiced (see Allen 1996: 267). With the changing landscape of larger structures of domination embedded in women's reproductive capabilities and in cattle-based bridewealth ideologies, some men feared losing control over women's sexuality and reproduction and thus their dominance over women. Educated women with access to independent income were perceived as being able and willing to re-define the terms of the conjugal contract on which *cieng nuära* exchange of goods, services, labour and privileges between husbands and wives were based (Whitehead 1981). The different strategies of marriage adopted by returnee young men illustrate that while some were ready to embrace more equal gender relations and division of labour with educated women, others perceived such change as a loss in their personal and communal status.

This shows that the movement between different places of displacement and post-return emplacement sets gender relations in flux with gender relations being shaped and negotiated within and between these settings. Those men who had been displaced and subjected to education and gender mainstreaming for longer periods see a higher value of (re)shaping the terms of conjugal contract. They acknowledge that ultimately educated and empowered women will be able to improve wellbeing of their households and communities. Those who had been displaced for shorter periods or who had stayed behind perceived the immediate (personal) costs of women's empowerment in the immediate loss of their own status (as men). These contradictions demonstrate that change is not a linear process; it is also a deeply personal experience that challenges the imagined and experienced community and personal 'identity'.

3.2. Girls/young women and choice: marriage as freedom, marriage and freedom

On late afternoons, I usually saw Nyakueth, Nyariek and other groups of girls elegantly dressed gathering in places where young men spent their time: on the football field, in local tea/coffee shops in the market or a local disco. Girls laughing and flirting with passing men were also present at celebrations, football matches and community gatherings. The importance of marriage was widely debated among (returnee) girls.

Nyakueth, a 20-year-old single woman, was back from Kenya wearing nice clothes and red *khaway* (foreign) hair extensions. "*She will be a new item on the market and will have many offers*," commented Nyayena, her friend. "*She will be able to choose among the men who will try to engage her. Kakuma girls are desirable items, because we are civilised a bit and educated a bit*." Nyakueth was trying to look good. She was wearing her best clothes, had nicely plaited hair and painted nails and toes. When I asked her about what settling-in meant for her, she immediately replied:

> Marriage. I have been a girl in my father's home for too long. Now, that I am back from Kakuma after 12 years away, I am ready to have my [own] home. All my age mates are married, but I am late because I was in education. Now, it is time for me to have my own home. I will be really settled when I marry.

Nyariek who returned from Khartoum was also debating the options of marriage. She left Ler in 1997 when conflict intensified. In Khartoum, she finished secondary education in 2006. She and her two brothers got educated while her younger sister stayed at home to assist their mother. Nyariek's father, a businessman, wanted Nyariek to finish education and did not mind that she was still unmarried at the age of 24. In March 2007, Nyariek came back to Ler and was hired as a teachers' trainer and a teacher in the Ler primary school. She stayed in her brother's house together with his youngest wife and her sister.

> Right now, I am also getting ready to be married. There are many men who come to propose: those from Kenya, Khartoum and Ler. But I am still waiting and I have not given a green light to any of them. I am 24 now and the people worry that I will not marry. All my age mates are married with children already! I have also decided that now it is a good time for me to marry. I want to have a husband and children, but also it is the only way for me to have a position in the community. My people want me to be an MP – but I can only be given a position in the community if I am married and I

> have children. This is when the people will see whether I am a good mother and a wife. As a girl, you cannot be given a leadership in the community. You can only work either in the school as a teacher or in the hospital […].
>
> I definitely do not want to marry a man with *gaar* – these men are bad. They do not know anything. They just beat their wives. Also, I want a husband who is educated – maybe go to university […].
>
> After the marriage, I will continue working. If there is a problem between me and the first wife, I can go and build a separate house somewhere else and the man will be able to come and visit me. It is better for me not to stay with the first wife. Also, I want to have four children, and buy a car, so I can be independent and I can afford to take all the children to school. This is important. Also, if anything happens I will divorce, if I have a job I will be able to stay by myself – and not worry about the person who will be providing for me. In this society it is very difficult to divorce. When you are educated, the men will pay many cows for you, maybe even 75 or 100. And then it will be hard to divorce if something happens. It is better to have a job and put some money to the side, so if there is a problem, I can buy cows with my money and return them to the husband.

Due to education and being away, a number of returnee girls managed to reach an older age without being married. In Nuerland girls were married off earlier usually at16-18. As discussed in chapter 5, conflict and impoverishment drastically lowered the marriage age for girls. Despite the higher bridewealth for educated girls, impoverished families saw an immediate profit in marrying off their daughters. In post-war Ler, girls as young as 12 or 13 were already preparing for marriage. I witnessed several such cases especially in rural areas. Older girls were lacking, either having been married off during wars or taken by force by rebels. Thus, most of the returnee girls' age mates in Nuerland were already married and there was a substantial social and family pressure on returnee girls to follow suit. I asked Nyariek how she had managed not to be married for such a long time. "*As long as you refuse to marry, the family cannot force you. I have been refusing until now. And I will not marry until I finish university. There are very few Nuer women who are educated.*" Wearing an elegant skirt and high heels, she balanced an umbrella shading her from the sun. She looked like a town woman, different from those around her.

The narratives of Nyakueth and Nyariek illustrate the general desire of returnee girls to find marriage partners. In their view, their settling-in process after return was associated with the establishment of own household and a family. As for the young men, social emplacement required an establishment of a community and one self within it. A young divorcee in Ler explained the benefits of being a (married) woman:

> It is good to have a husband. When you have your husband you have your freedom. I have spent many years in the house of my mother and I was not free there because there were many things that I was asked to do for the family. I wanted to get married and have my own home. When you are married it is good because then you have help. The man does things that he is supposed to do and the woman does things that she is supposed to do. You know, there are things that women cannot do and that's why they need husbands in their lives.

Despite being divorced, Nyamai continuously associated freedom with marriage. She was divorced against her will by her husband who found another wife and wanted to take back the cattle he paid for Nyamai to be able to marry the second woman. He claimed that Nyamai was a loose woman and that he had affairs with other men. Nyamai's two children were taken away from her and given to her husband. She felt that being back at her parents' house did not guarantee her access to resources, decision-making and status in the community. Hence, she finally remarried to Jay, a returnee young man from Kakuma. She immediately became pregnant in order to strength her position as a married woman and secure her future.

For some returnee girls and unmarried women, marriage was associated with access to 'freedom' and 'own house'. Nyakueth, Nyariek, Nyamai and other girls recognised their relative weak and dependent position as girls in the community and within the household. Unable to enjoy the freedoms previously guaranteed in Kakuma, some perceived marriage a possibility of freeing themselves, at least in theory, from dependence on their parents and gaining greater autonomy and. Through marriage and subsequent procreation, as *ciek* (woman/wife), girls pass the threshold of adulthood and womanhood rights associated with their social position. As discussed in chapter 4, with the birth of a child, *kau* (young wife) acquires a status of *ciek,* which awards her rights over property at home, access to land and resources. As we have seen in chapter 7, women's entitlements to land and resources are regulated through men, either their fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. With the birth of each child the social position of woman stabilises and becomes more secure and autonomous (see chapter 4; Hutchinson 1980, 1990). The embeddedness of gender identity in the institution of marriage was strongly adhered to among girls and women who had stayed behind or been displaced to Khartoum.

Status of a married woman guarantees also access to rights and privileges within the community, as the narrative of Nyariek suggests. For her to achieve a position as an MP she needed to prove that she was a 'responsible' person, which in the case of women ment a 'good' wife and mother. Nyariek's interest in marriage was hence linked to her wider strategic objectives that she set for herself.

A 'westernised' Nuer married man employed by an international agency explained why girls rush to get married:

> Girls want to get married because they want to be free from the family. They are eager to get a title of a wife and get their own home. However, they do not realise the pressure of being married and the pressure to bear children afterwards.

The flip-side of marriage and the constraints that it created for women were also recognised by some returnee girls and women. **"***When you are a girl you want to marry because you want your freedom. But then you marry and you get yourself into another problem. There is no solution* [for women and girls]." Nyayena, like others, recognised, however, that the rights and relative 'freedom' that a woman gained through marriage were dependent on the husband. Nyakuol, a returnee widow described this:

> *Wutni nuäri jiäke long* [Nuer men are bad], here. They do not respect their wives, and they can beat you whenever they want, if you have not cooked, or talked back to them, or were too tired to dig the garden; or even if you did not serve his food on your knees. There is nothing you can do about it [because the husband paid bridewealth for you]. The court will always give the right to the man. It is better to stay alone or continue with school for these young girls, than get married. Being a *ciek nuära* is exhausting!

Female subordination was reinforced through the institution of marriage and the dominant position of the husband attained through bridewealth. The narratives of Nyakuol and Jany at the beginning of the chapter about the physical punishment used by husbands reveal how this subordination was supposed to be maintained within the household. Beating of wives made them obedient, honest, hard-working and deferential. This further buttressed a male-constructed gender ideology in which the husband had authority and was the decision-maker. As elsewhere in Africa, bridewealth was central to structuring gender relations within marriage (Lovett 2001: 56). "*Once the bridewealth is paid, as a woman you can do nothing. It is like he bought you* [owns you]," a female elder in Ler told me. Bridewealth gave husbands ultimate

power over women, and forced women to concede that her husband was her superior. This was manifest in the way women referred to their husbands as '*guor*' (father), hence acknowledging their position as minors.

Many returnee and stayee women and girls recognised these gender hierarchical constraints instilled in marriage and associated it with loss of the relative freedoms enjoyed in Kakuma. While some girls were eagerly interested in getting married, others fiercely opposed family pressures while seeking a degree of autonomy through education and financial independence.[188] Nyariek's narrative illustrates how returnee (and some stayee) girls and young women were fully aware of their need to be strategic in their choices of husbands. With their education, exposure to human rights and other cultures, returnee girls, like Nyariek, had a broader perspective on life beyond marriage. They balanced their options between further education, financial independence through paid employment and making their own choice of husbands. Hence, Nyariek aware of the constraints imposed by marriage manoeuvered cleverly her limited options. Similarly to other returnee girls, she was looking for a 'good husband' similar to her – educated, 'worldly', aware of women's rights and with salaried employment. Returnee young women saw the local Nuer men as 'bad' and 'ignorant', violent and misogynist. They recognised the importance of their own financial independence as a way of gaining greater autonomy from the husband and their own family. This is underscored by Nyariek's insistance on keeping her employment even when she is married.

The education that returnee girls gained was seen by their families as having added value, and expanding girls' negotiating position. Kuem's example in the introduction and Nyariek's narrative confirm that educated girls were commanding higher prices than their illiterate age mates. War-time impoverishment of families, loss of cattle and other property, high competition for girls among returning and local young men were substantially inflating the bride-price. Girls' families were asking up to 75 head of cattle, in comparison to 30-35 rates typical among the western Nuer before the war (Hutchinson 1996). Kuem, the 'lost boy' who married a 'local girl' commented on the additional payments demanded by the bride's family. "*You have to pay for the pen that*

[188] Most returnee girls continued with schooling after their 'return' to Ler. There were also some local girls, like Nyakwony and Nyalada, who persuaded their parents to send them to school.

educated the girl. Also if the man is educated, he has to pay higher bridewealth since he has better income." The girls' high 'price' made them desirable 'items' for politicians, high ranking SPLA officers, wealthy traders and those working for international organisations. Similarly to Nyariek, these girls were also finding husbands among the diaspora Nuer living in Khartoum, East Africa or the west. Nyariek for example had a relationship (over email) with a 'lost boy' resettled in the USA. Returnee parents due to their experiences in displacement and exposure to girls' education saw the long-term benefits of women's empowerment. Yet for those who had stayed behind, and were impoverished as a result of conflict, education of girls was threatening their position of power. Despite educated women yielding higher bridewealth, their parents were not willing to shed control over their daughters. Education is time-consuming and, in comparison to bridewealth, does not guarantee an immediate pay-off. There is also a risk that educated and empowered women might take matters in their own hands and negotiate their own choices and preferences and thus undermine the position and preferences of their elders.

Marriage was no longer only about maintaining clan and *cieng* alliances, ensuring continuation of agnatic descent and bringing 'pride'. It was becoming more of an economic process, mediated through educated girls who were providing higher revenues for their parents. Due to substantial losses of property during conflict girls were often seen as the only source of livelihood and wealth. A returnee girl noted:

> Girls are business here; your parents want you to get married so they can get cows from you. They do not care whether you will be beaten or mistreated by the husband. Those of us who were in Kakuma have seen the goodness of education, and many of us prefer to continue with school rather than get married. But the pressure in Sudan from your parents is great. There is also a lot of pressure from young men, who want to marry you. They see you as educated and able to contribute to family, and will pay more for you to be their wife.

Education of girls was leading to their commodification. Parents often saw the advantage of sending a girl to school, evaluating the future returns that would accrue on her marriage. Fierce competition for the scarce number of educated girls was causing skyrocketing of bridewealth prices. This, however, led to further infringements of girls' rights as they found themselves unable to marry a husband of their choice but compelled to agree to the highest bidder. Since young men often could not afford them

they were also married as second wives of older wealthy men. As Nyariek pointed out, high payments were making it more difficult for women to pursue a divorce, as their families found it difficult to return the cattle received through bridewealth. This was also the reason why, as Nyariek's narrative illustrates, keeping financial autonomy in the marriage was an important bargaining tool for young returnee women. Access to a paid employment guaranteed women a greater autonomy and agency and an exit strategy from abusive relationships.

Most of my girlfriends from Kakuma or Khartoum talked about family pressures to marry. Some narrated stories of the compliance of their own mothers in staging 'stealing' (*kual nyal*) of girls. NyaSunday, a returnee from Kakuma, explained how her mother arranged for her to be engaged against her will. The mother told her to enter a house and locked her inside. Inside, a man who had been wooing her but whom she had spurned, was waiting for her. Forcing himself on her she was raped. Now considered a *keeagh* (unmarried concubine), NyaSunday was shamed in the community and forced to marry the man. Other girls reported that if a girl resisted, women would often hold her head so "the man can work easier on you from behind." These stories were also confirmed by the mothers of the men, who proudly talked about their strategies to "convince the girl to love the man." Interestingly, the word 'rape' does not exist in the Nuer language. The act is rather described as 'forcing the woman/girl' or 'taking her by force'. It is also not considered an offence in Nuer customary law. Thus, girls are unable to seek justice in local courts. Before the wars, one of the main rights of the girl was to choose her husband (see Hutchinson 1980, 1996; interviews with elders). Due to violence experienced during the wars and subsequent economic pressures girls' ability to reject marriage has shrunk substantially.

Some girls and young women being pressured into marriage devised evasion strategies. Some insisted on continuing education and asked parents to send them to school. Others decided to marry men of their own choice, often running away with their boyfriends and through pregnancy forcing parents to accept the man. During a number of gender awareness workshops that I attended, women and men discussed the impact of 'forced marriages'. They pointed to cases of girls hanging themselves as a result of being forced to marry men against their will. Although they could only refer to a few recent instances the fact that such stories circulated shows how girls protested their

subordinate position. Girls defied marriage by running away with their boyfriends to Kenya or Khartoum, which was common already in the 1980s (Hutchinson 1996) and on the increase in the post-war Ler. These strategies, although often seen as further undermining the position of the girl in the community and branding her as 'bad' (*jiäke*), 'loose' or '*keeagh*' (unmarried concubine or, as commonly referred to, prostitute) demonstrated the use of girls' own limited agency to control their lives.

These attempts can be interpreted as recovering female agency (Ortner 1996). Despite their 'muted voice', through overt and covert actions women and girls were finding ways to resist male (and other female) dominance. This is a further example of how girls and women do not consent to dominance and patriarchal hegemony, but rather, through their small acts of resistance, show their agency in contesting, stretching and negotiating their narrow autonomies. These acts of resistance reveal that the household is a key site of struggle over gendered norms, interests and choices (Whitehead 1981). As agency is exercised within particular (hegemonic) structures of power, it is often difficult to define it and interpret as it entails culturally and historically specific modes of action (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001: 16). While it is typical to either ignore or romanticise female agency as "victims or heroines" (cf. Abu-Lughod 1990), the daily acts of defiance often remain discredited as 'insubordination' and are termed 'bad' or 'behaving like a man'. These acts also demonstrate that some returnee women and girls were willing and able to continue maintaining and expanding their empowered status acquired in Kakuma.

Gendered emplacement after 'return home' poses different challenges and constraints for young people. Marriage was one of the ways of forging community bonds, (re)creating one own's family and (re)establishing the landscape of social relations that gave a meaning to the everyday actions and interactions. Place-making through marriage was a highly gendered experience directly linked to the practice and negotiation of gender identities and relations. This was part of the transformation and emergence of a post-war 'community' in Ler and in Nuerland more broadly. It confirmed how the experience and the existence of a community, as Gupta and Ferguson argued, "is inevitably constituted by a wider set of social and spatial relation" (2001:7). Marriage remains an important step for young men and women in passage to full adulthood, expanding (informal) rights, yet at the same time constraining their

freedoms acquired and experienced in Kakuma. The diverse practices and experiences of (re)shaping masculinities and femininities employed by returnee young women and men show a rather messy picture of the Nuer post-war gender relations. The 'new' gender practices that they were bringing to the stayee communities were causing gender norms and relations to be in a state of flux.

4. GENDERED EMPLACEMENT: GENDER RELATIONS IN-FLUX

The homecoming of displaced populations provoked debate on what it means to be a woman/man in Nuer community. The moral panic mentioned in chapter 1 around young people's dress codes spread across southern Sudan, including Western Upper Nile communities. Controversy centred around the key ideal of 'morality', gender and power. Displaced populations were bringing different cultural habits, including education, dress-codes, religion and manners that collided with gender ideology and stayee identities. Homecoming revealed dilemmas about, and resulted in a confrontation between, different forms of masculinities and femininities.

4.1. *Waraqa* and pen versus *gaar* and gun

Returnees, particularly *nei ti cike ker* (people who have seen light, i.e. 'modern educated pro-women men' and 'educated empowered women'), provoked a discussion around alternative forms of gender identities and power relations. Initiation to manhood through education, Christianity and 'pro-women' views were confronted with local ideals of *gaar*, *mut* and *ric* as well as hyper-masculinities based on the gun, participation in the liberation struggle and shared life in the army.

The power of the pen (and paper) was undeniable in enhancing the position of men (and women) in the community. On the road to Adok, I was stopped by an elderly woman, who asked if I could write her a letter allowing her to access money from the local administration. Most widows registered with local authorities were receiving a small stipend from the commissioner's office but could only do so with documentation. The woman was unable to understand that only the commissioner's office could give her such a magic *waraqa* (paper). Literacy was a highly considered asset.

Yet, educated returnees were confronted by the local concepts of masculinities, especially militarised forms of hyper-masculinities. Kuok often complained:

> The power of the pen and the power of the gun are not equal. The people who were in the military in SPLA and had ranks got high positions. They are in charge of things. It is difficult for me, an educated person, to argue with them, because the power of the pen is not respected in Sudan.

Militarisation of Nuer society and the fact that the bulk of male population served in the army often elevated the power of the gun above that of the pen. Those who did not participate in the military struggle often felt sidelined: "*If you do not fight, they will tell you: are you abuna* [priest]*? If you are a real Nuer, you have to fight*," commented a young returnee father. "*In Kakuma, we learned to discuss issues, but here, this means nothing. If you are a man you have to fight.*" Although the 'new' forms of masculinities were often undermined and ridiculed especially among other men, educated 'worldly' men were becoming desirable husbands among the local girls. A returnee young wife commented:

> It is better to marry a *wur* Kakuma [Kakuma man], at least he knows how to read and write, he can get a job and will care for you and the children. He will also respect you, because he knows something about gender equality and women's rights. But to get a *wur nuära* with *gaar* it is a real trouble. He will beat you, make you work a lot and he will only care about his cows for which he will get into fights.

Even girls in rural areas often expressed their preference for 'educated husbands with a job'. Returnee men on the other hand were highly desired by and they often ran into trouble with local girls pressuring them to marry. They would come to the homes of such men and then claim that they had had sex with them. "*To play with local girls is dangerous for us* [returnee men]. *They see our education, they think we have money, and they want to marry you straight away*," explained Jany, a young Kakuma man. The 'new' values that some returnee young men were bringing into the stayee communities were slowly gaining currency among the stayees. As with educated Masaai men (Hodgson 2004) and educated and employed Nigerian young men in Ado-Odo (see Cornwall 2003), young returnee Nuer men were influencing (re)negotiation of local concepts of manhood and masculinity, and altering some intergenerational and gender relations. In the process of emplacement and the constant confrontation between competing values held by stayees and returnees, new and different set of meanings,

identities and practices was emerging. As in the case of the Mursi and their movement from one setting to another (Turton 2005), in their daily interactions, returnees and stayees were engaged in an active process of creating a community and redefining the terms of *cieng nuära*.

4.2. 'Loose girls' and valuable wives: womanhood reconsidered

Returnee girls were also bringing new concepts of femininities and challenging the local and militarised forms of womanhood (see chapters 4 and 5). Educated, outspoken, seen as good cooks, being able to take better care of children and contributing to the community through their ability to find paid work (chapter 7), returnee girls and women were expanding the realm of possibilities and freedoms for women. Notwithstanding their reputation as 'loose' and 'bad', they were often seen as desirable marriage candidates due to their education and ability to contribute to the household.

Despite constraints and local shaming, returnee girls and young women continued to challenge the limited gender status that they occupied in Nuerland. Some of them played volleyball and socialised with men, others continued to go to the market, sometimes spoke at public meetings and expressed their views in court. Returnee fashions and the practice of 'roaming around free' were becoming popular among younger stayees in Ler. With the influx of returnees more girls started wearing 'inappropriate clothing', jeans became the most highly-prized items in the market. When I offered to go shopping with my host's daughter, 13-year old Nyamuc – who had spent most of her life in Ler – immediately wanted to get a pair of jeans. At the wedding of Kuem, the bride and her bridesmaid (who had never left Ler) were both wearing denim outfits and red hair-extensions (see figure 18). Although returnee girls had to some extent to conform to local fashion and behaviour requirements, their own preferences were changing local customs. During my ten-month stay in Ler, there were increasing numbers of girls riding bicycles, playing sports, attending school, going to the local 'disco' and moving around 'freely'. Cosmetics also became desirable 'modern' items among locals and Kakuma women were profitably trading in soaps, body lotions and hair-extensions they had brought from Kenya. On my trips to Nairobi, they often asked me to bring new supplies.

Returnee (young) women were also working as teachers, nurses, community organisers, party members and bringing up children differently. Nyaboth, the SPLM gender secretary in Ler, had never left Sudan but had some basic primary education. Married to Par Jak, a famous local SPLA commander in the area, she was bringing up their three boys and teaching them domestic tasks. She explained the challenges of introducing change into the Nuer lifestyle:

> We see from the returnees, like Nyakuol [widow from chapter 7], that their sons help at home, share cooking and domestic tasks with girls. Their daughters also go to school, and we want our all our children, not only boys to be educated. I teach my sons how to do domestic duties. You know once they know how to do these things at home, then when they marry, they will also do them in their home and will not be ashamed to help their wives, because they have done these things before. But there are very few women who think this way. Most do not really follow this pattern. Change is coming slowly and it has to come from the youngest ones. If the children are changed, then the society will change as well.

Nyajuc, a 70-something year old grandmother of my host, commented on the change status of girls and women:

> In the past, to be a girl and a woman is to marry. The girl becomes a woman when she is married, the bridewealth is paid, and she gives birth to children. But now, girls go to school, they can bring something for the family, not only cows through bridewealth. To be a woman now is not only to be married and give birth to children. A woman has more obligations [at home and in the community] because of education.

Returnee girls were promoting the idea of schooling among local girls. Nyakuma, my host and other stayee women often commented on the benefits of education for girls. Due to the lack of education, they recognised that their bargaining position within the household was weaker than the one of educated Kakuma girls. Under the influence of other returnee girls (and also perhaps due to me), Nyakuma joined an adult education programme ran by the Catholic Church. She insisted that her 13-year old daughter Nyamuc continues education in the Ler primary school. They often asked me to help them with homework and quiz them in mathematics and English. Nyamuc sought to emulate other returnee girls and became determined to succeed in school. Despite her numerous domestic tasks, she was diligent in her homework. "*I want to be like your friend Nyayena, who knows how to read and write, speaks thok khaway* [foreign

language, i.e. English] *and has a job*," Nyamuc explained her learning zeal, citing the example of a returnee friend.

Education for girls and women was also being slowly recognised by local (male) authorities. On a visit to the Ler commissioner, Nyayena, a returnee woman directly asked for land, a job and financial support. She was outspoken and when she saw a mattress in the compound of the commissioner, she inquired if he would give it to her: "*I am a returnee and need to a bed for my daughter and myself. Can you assist me? Once I get a job, I will pay you back.*" The commissioner smiled and told me:

> Returnee women [and girls] are very different from those who stayed behind. They have been educated and they are not afraid to ask for their rights [entitlements]. They have no fear, are able to represent the community and support their families. They are bringing a change for women here.

As with other 'wayward', 'dangerous', 'wicked' and 'vagabond' African women (see Cornwall 2001; Lovett 2001; Hodgson and McCurdy 2001), young returnee women in Nuerland in their 'transgressive' behaviour were contributing to transformation of gender relations and other domains of social life. This was not only through adoption of new fashion styles among the local girls, but also through their desire to go to school. 'Somehow educated', as they referred to themselves, returnee girls and young women enjoyed greater ability to access paid jobs, communicate with outsiders, raise issues with the authorities, expand scope to choose their husbands and (re)negotiate the patriarchal bargain within the household (Kandiyoti 1988). Despite the decline of the privileges girls and women enjoyed in Kakuma, they manoeuvred their limited spaces in Nuerland. Their mothers, and often fathers, who had also spent substantial time in displacement supported the quest of girls for further education. Nyakuol, Nyajung and Nyakwony (introduced in previous chapter) sent their daughters to schools in Bentiu and often talked about the importance of education for girls. "*When they know something, their lives will be better. They will not be easily abused by men. Girls who are illiterate they just accept the beating, but girls who know something are respected by their husbands and in the community. They can also be more autonomous*," commented Nyajung. Through their emplacement practices, returnee women and girls were reshaping concepts of femininities and bringing about a change, even if

incremental and more in terms of consciousness rather than actual practice, for other women in Ler.

The position of girls in the community was slowly changing due to education, and partially due to the spread of Christianity. Churches were promoting an enhanced role for women in the church, and sisters from the Catholic Comboni order were running special education classes and courses for girls and young women. More girls were enrolling in primary classes, as parents realised that educated girls have greater value for the family and community. They become 'useful' not only due to performing domestic tasks and bringing wealth through marriage but also by making their own money. Nyayena, a young returnee woman who got a job as a midwife in Ler, commented:

> […] if you as a girl finish school, you can then get a job and help your family. They will realise that the cows are not the most important thing to help them. Girls can also help their families through education and getting jobs, not only through marriage. But you know here, girls are a business. We provide family with wellbeing and wealth.

While debating the issue with her sisters and other female relatives, they all agreed that it was important for a girl or a woman to be educated in order to have financial independence from the husband. "*You can then have a job and earn some money. You will be able to pay for many things and provide things for your children. If something happens with your husband, then you can always rely on yourself. You see this is better,"* Nyayena told me while cooking over a blazing fire. Education was also giving girls a better awareness of their freedoms and a way to (re)negotiate their subordinate position in the household and community. Nyayena explained why uneducated women are forced to stay in abusive relationships due to the lack of their own financial independence.

Nyakuma, my illiterate host, succinctly summarised the importance of education in changing women's position in the household and in the community:

> Why are there no women in the government? There are only three women in the government the ones who can read and write. If you do not know how to read and write, you cannot be in the government. Now, women are not equal with men. Women are at home doing all the work and men are outside working in hospital,

> government, army and police. This is the culture. In the past, the men had their *luak* and their responsibility was taking care of cows. Women were in charge of the *duël* [house]. Now, there are no cows so men sit around. But things will change when girls and boys will go to school together and women know how to read and write. They will come together and be equal like in your place.

Another sign of women's greater autonomy and awareness of their own interests was an increase in number of women asking for divorce. As the chiefs in Ler commented, this signified, on the one hand, women's growing disobedience, and on the other, their tiredness with "useless and abusive husbands". Women were also contesting male privilege by breaking taboos and 'trespassing' gendered spaces by working in 'public spaces', including the market, hospitals, schools and the government. While in the past, women and men ate separately as a sign of respect, now women openly shared food with related or unrelated men. I also participated in animal sacrifice where, due to the lack of immediate male relatives, a woman was asked to slaughter a cow, a task previously exclusively reserved for men. A new custom was also entering the bridewealth sharing with a cow being given to a female friend of the bride's mother, previously reserved for the male friends of the bride's father.

When Nuer women slowly start entering education and work, although still limited, they bring a direct challenge to the male breadwinner and patriarch position (see Elson 1991; Kabeer 1994; Kandiyoti 1998). Their acts of 'transgression' by speaking publicly, sitting on chairs on pair with men and participating in decision-making in the community were signs of transformations taking place within Nuer gender relations. As one of the Kakuma Nuer widows commented, "*women are still* [behind, to come up]. *But now it is much better than before* [the wars]. *At least we have some women in the government, and now we are invited to speak at ceremonies, and are given* [some] *our rights. Things are changing slowly here in Ler.*"

(Some) men were worried about the growing autonomy of women and rendering their own position 'useless'. Ruan, a young returnee man from Kakuma, shared with me once the news he heard on the radio: "*I heard that there are special places where women can go and get sperm and then they can get babies by themselves. If this happens women will not need us* [men] *any longer. We will be useless, and they will be completely independent and free*." This reveals the gender power of men linked to

reproduction (and the cattle complex). In these metaphors of women "getting babies by themselves", the Nuer men were expressing their concern of losing power and control over (their) women and children. While reproduction was bounding women to subordinate positions through the rights over children assigned to the husband who paid cattle, the possibility of women of freeing themselves from this predicament threatened male privilege and hegemonic position.

Although seen as 'loose', 'bad' and 'immoral', returnee girls (and women) were expanding concepts of femininities, women's positions and gender norms. 'Loose' returnee girls (and women) were bringing ideas of change into Nuer communities. While 'loose' and 'bad' signified the fear of men and some women of 'losing' control over their daughters and wives, at the same time, it pointed to changing gender power relations. As with women doing men's tasks (chapter 7), 'loose' girls and women were posing a threat to the power structures through their 'uncontrollable' behaviour, 'roaming' freely around the market and transgressing 'gender acceptable behaviour'. Girls were contesting and stretching gender space and boundaries also through their subversive politics of their own agency. Through female solidarity and support from some women (and men), girls were able to exercise their limited agency (Ortner 1996) and subverting some of the strict constraints to their status enshrined in the hegemonic structures of *cieng nuära* ('our culture') discourse. These actions, as in the case of other 'wicked' and 'vagabond' women in Africa, became "sites for debate over, and occasionally transformations in, gender relations, social practices, cultural norms, and political-economic institutions" (Hogdson and McCurdy 2001: 2). What it meant to be a girl, a woman and a young men was being questioned, contested and (re)negotiated in the post-war Nuerland.

Returnee women's reshaping of femininities and gender relations led also to the changing terms of the landscape of social norms of the emerging post-war *cieng nuära*. Through their own emplacement practices negotiated with those who had stayed behind, returnee women and girls were transforming femininities, gender discourses of power and terms of exchange and sharing within the household and the wider community. Although not able to benefit from the same opportunities and freedoms as in Kakuma, they were nonetheless actively stretching the choices and options available to women in post-war Ler. While they were engaged in a place-making project in Ler,

they were also transforming themselves and their gender identities as a result of emplacement processes. This reflects Stuart Hall's suggestion (cited in gupta and Ferguson 2001), rather than fixed and stable, identity is a "meeting point" – "a point of suture or temporary identification – that constitutes and re-forms that subject so as to enable that subject to act (2001: 13). By adding gender, this process reveals how identity, 'home' and subject formation within it are intertwined with agency.

5. CONCLUSION

The chapter attempts to add a more grounded gender perspective to the literature on, and knowledge of the processes and experience of, 'homecoming' and emplacement in the context of refugee return. Filtering the notions of 'home' and 'return' through a gender lens shows complexities, different strategies and challenges in (re)establishing oneself in the process of return. I also demonstrate how processes of *beben cieng* and *nyuuri piny* are experienced differently by men and women and lived through their gender identities and the institution of marriage. Marriage is especially important in the context of forging new and old community bonds, (re)creating landscape of communities social relations and finding one self within them. This analysis allows us to better understand how complex social processes involved in gendered emplacement play themselves out not only on women and men's bodies but also on their social identities, gender institutions and ideology, networks, physical capital and place itself.

I argue that as much as forced displacement and relocation affect 'reordering' of gender relations within different societies (Babiker 1999; Indra 1999), the notions and experiences of 'home' and 'return' are both gendered and gendering often shifting the practice of gender relations themselves. Based on culturally-inscribed notions of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' within, and in relation to, the 'home' space as a site of household, women and men's experiences of 'losing home' due to forced displacement and 'settling-in' after 'return' vary due to gendered obligations and entitlements within the household and the community.

Gendered emplacement involved learning *cieng nuära* (Nuer culture), 'local' both imagined and war-transformed gender practices and (re)negotiating own gender

identities, aspirations and norms. It also resulted in shifting and reshaping gender identities and relations are returnees moved from one cultural setting (in Kakuma) to another one (in Ler). Women and men are constructed differently within the space of 'home' and from an early age subordination and obedience to elders and males are instilled in women. Due to war-time separation, disjointed and fragmented family lives, 'homecoming' poses several challenges for the underlying gender ideology. Entering and (re)establishing a web of relations, obligations and expectations linked to Nuer ideals of femininity, masculinity and gender norms creates challenges of belonging and fitting in, especially for returnee young men and women who grew up in displacement. They were coming with a baggage of diverse experiences in refugee camps. Separation from family and community created an opportunity for transgressing gender ideology and norms and enlarging a space of freedoms for young women and men. 'Homecoming' did not necessarily mean going back to an imagined past, but rather entering a different set of cultural and social relations, and 'finding oneself' within them. Different gender norms could be practised in Kakuma giving girls and women more equal status in the society, because it was not 'home'. In Ler, these ideas and new social practices clashed with *cieng nuära* ('our culture') gender ideologies and the identities of stayees. They revealed the differentiated femininities, masculinities and gender norms constructed as a result of conflict-induced displacement. 'Homecoming' meant for young women and men to obey family and community pressures to be 'good Nuer girls' and 'respectable women/men'. As a result, space to exercise Kakuma acquired freedoms shrunk.

Yet, women used their agency to contest, resist and (re)negotiate some of the gender hierarchies and subordinate femininities. While marriage (and procreation) remained associated with full passage to adulthood, most young people also associated it with the process of *nyuuri piny* (settling-in) through creation of one's own household. Through acts of resistance and practice of their limited agency, both young returnee women and men were bringing change and contesting local gender identities, norms and practices embedded in the institution of marriage.

Although Ler offered fewer possibilities to practice 'new modern femininities and masculinities', returnee women and men eagerly negotiated gendered opportunities as they moved between the different cultural settings. Similarly to other pastoralists

whose lifestyles are migratory, returnee women and men in Ler were engaged in a continuous process of place-making that (re)defined their own gender identities within in it. As a result, gender relations continued to being in-flux. The diverse and at times contradictory behaviours and practices employed by returnee women and men in defying or conforming to local gender ideas show that the landscape of social and gender norms and relations was in motion. This contradiction reveals that women's empowerment and adoption of alternative masculinities are not linear processes. They are rather full of turns and twists as displaced Nuer women and men move between diversecultural settings and encounter those who had been exposed to different gendered experiences. Through their daily practices and negotiations of gender relations, they attempt to create a shared meaning and a sense of place that defines them and their community.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION:
JÄAL[189] *AND CIENG NUÄRA:* WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE*?*

1. DILEMMAS ABOUT SOCIAL LIFE 'IN-FLUX'

When I was leaving Ler in September 2007 Nyakuol, Kuok and Nyariek were partially settled-in. They had found their relatives and had built huts on their land. Nyakuol opened a small shop in the market, cultivated a garden and sent her children to school. In recognition of her strong leadership skills, she was asked to participate in the SPLA political campaign as a representative of Ler. Nyariek, still living with her father, was in the process of getting married. Although she had convinced her father to let her complete primary school, she continued to battle against other restrictions imposed on her. She had to stop playing football and was often reprehended for wearing short skirts. Kuok was working as a teacher and constructing his *duël* (house). In 2008, he got married and moved in with his wife. He started teaching his wife reading, writing and English to, as he told me, "share knowledge and bring her up." Nevertheless, Nyakuol, Nyariek and Kuok felt that their social relations and identities were 'in-flux'. They were debating the changing gender norms and relations and found it difficult to conform to the expectations of their families to 'behave' according to the rules of *cieng nuära* (Nuer village/community/culture). *Nyuuri piny* (settling-in) of the displaced populations prompted discussions around transformations of gender relations among the residents of Ler, Nuerland and other areas in southern Sudan. Tensions between 'stayees' and 'returnees' shed light on changes and continuities of social and gender relations in the aftermath of civil conflicts and repatriation of the displaced.

This study echoes Hammond's (2004a) emphasis on the importance of anthropological concepts of emplacement and social change in the study of forced displacement during its different phases. As she points out, these concepts "question the primacy of sedentarist orientations and explore the creation of meaning, identity, and community in the context of flux and disorder [they] can and should be used to investigate what happens to people who return" (Hammond 2004a: 207). By focusing on the practices

[189] *Jäal* translates as traveller or visitor; this is how those who stayed behind referred to returnees.

and experiences of settling in and building a meaning for Ler returnees, the study of Nuer displacement engenders the emplacement concept. While I followed Hammond's suggestion and "focus[ed] on individual and collective agency as determining elements in the experience of return" (ibid), my analysis examines the gendered and generational nature of agency and how it interplays with processes of social change. It points to the fluidity of gender and generational relations and their (re)configuration in different stages of displacement and emplacement. To understand the complexities of the gendered and generational nature of these processes is crucial. They are of paramount importance not only for southern Sudanese policy makers and development workers, but have wider consequences for all involved in humanitarian and development assistance. These contributions have both theoretical and practical implications.

In this concluding chapter, I comment on the challenges of studying conflict- and displacement-induced change in gender relations. I also reflect on the theoretical contributions of the study to wider questions about gender, generations, migration, displacement and return. Lastly, I point out some of the limitations of the study and identify potential areas for further investigation.

2. STUDYING DISPLACEMENT-INDUCED CHANGE IN GENDER RELATIONS

The main objective of my study - investigation of displacement-induced changes in gender relations in the context of 'return' - proved timely. The narratives of *ro geer* (change) were a common theme of discussions both among the elderly relaxing in the shade of *neem* trees and the young as they enjoyed a *shisha* (water pipe) and *qahwa* (coffee) in the Ler market. Women and men were preoccupied with *cieng mi pay ben* (the coming of new customs and lifestyle) into their communities in the aftermath of wars. While many were (re)building their livelihoods and social relations, they were also conscious that their post-war lives would not be the same.

My key concern was to examine causality between forced displacement and change in social, and primarily gender relations. However, as other authors have shown, studying change and, in particular, identifying causality of change is one of the most challenging tasks for social scientists (J. Scott 1988; Hutchinson 1996; Hodgson and McCurdy 2001; Kabeer 1994, 2000; Kandiyoti 1988; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007).

While ‘talking about change’ gives a partial account of how things are and how they were in the past, ‘doing change’ remains more imperceptible. Partly, this is because these changes are usually incremental and often invisible to the actors involved (George 2005), and even more so to outsiders. Yet despite the multiplicity of potential sources of change in often chaotic and fluid conditions of war and displacement, such contexts reveal how social relations are negotiated (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; Black 1993; Hammond 2004a), and in particular how gender is constructed, contested and (re)configured in an abruptly, rapidly changing environment. They enhance our understandings of lived gender and generational experiences and the challenges posed by the (re)negotiation of gender power relations.

The experiences of the Nuer described here confirm Stephen Lubkemann’s assertion that war, and war-time displacement, are social conditions that require even more creative and innovative approaches to survival, which often generates social change. Lubkemann argues that “as sites of both social reproduction and prolific social production (Hoffman and Lubkemann 2005), warscapes may provide privileged sites within which to theorize processes of social change and innovation” (2008:24). This is also the case in the context of creating a meaning, life and ‘home’, be it temporary in refugee camps or long-term as part of the post-return settlement. The different trajectories of people’s displacement and emplacement that I followed reveal the gendered nature of these processes and their implications for gender (and generational) relations of power, identity and practice. While “emplacement is a continuous process of generating meaning” (Hammond 2004a: 208), it also gives an opportunity to (re)define existing social relations, ideas and norms. Hence, what it means to be a Nuer woman/girl or man/boy for ‘stayees’ and displaced takes on a different dimension and shows how social relations and identities are variable and changeable.

How successful was my research approach in identifying ‘change’? I used several strategies to account for the ‘yardstick’ against which I measured ‘change’. First, the narratives of the elders both in Kakuma and in Ler allowed me to create an informed view of what social and gender relations were in the ‘old days’. Narratives, as Katie Gardner argues based on her research among Bengali elders, can convey hidden messages that can be interpreted as forms of protest and claims (2002: 222). In many cases, these narratives gave me an insight into the ‘ideals’ of what gender relations

should look like. They allowed me to locate the impetus for historical changes in the lives of the Nuer through personal experiences during a life-cycle. This method is, however, problematic as it provides a partial and subjective view based on specific personal experiences. Also, my position as an outsider obviously influenced the way the narratives of the elders were constructed. By juxtaposing these narratives against historical ethnographies of the Nuer, I attempted to minimise the shortcomings of this method. Weighing the views of the elders against those of the younger generations provided an inter-generational, even if partial, view of the turbulent history of the Nuer over the past 25 years. Coupled with family life histories, these narratives provided insights into changing gender relations based on diverse family members' experiences during war-time displacement.

Second, following the Nuer women and men's trajectories of displacement and emplacement through the multi-sited fieldwork in Kakuma and in Ler gave a unique perspective on the processes of conflict-induced displacement and their effects on and meanings attached by groups and individuals. Not only was I able to observe people's lives and the everyday practice of gender relations through the different stages of forced displacement but also I got a glimpse into their perceptions of the diverse contexts. One finding of the study is that displacement is irreversible and hence, social transformations associated with different stages of displacement are a continuous process. My methodological approach allowed me to investigate this issue empirically and compare people's relations across different places and times. While most studies focus on experiences during displacement, resettlement or post-war return, this study looked into social conditions and relations across different stages of displacement and emplacement.[190] This approach underscores the thesis's finding that changes in gender relations are a continuous process and, thus, gender relations need to be examined spatially and temporarily.

Third, by incorporating feminist analysis which centres gender, age and other axes of difference, this study provides a relational framework to understand women and men's experiences of displacement and mobility. It provides an avenue to account for

[190] See Lubkemann (2008) on the war in Mozambique as another example of a study that explores different stages of war-time displacement.

gendered dimensions of ‘change’ as experienced and perceived by women, men, old and young.

Women and men located changes in gender relations in war, violence and displacement. As shown in chapter 5, war and subsequent ethnicised violence had a direct impact on transforming gender identities, especially masculinities. Life stories of ‘lost boys’ manifest how separation from their families, experiences of military recruitment, participating in liberation struggles and spending decades in refugee camps created different passages to manhood and adulthood. Encounters with a ‘modernity’ in Kakuma forged by UN humanitarianism, household dispersal and general impoverishment of refugees were often quoted as sources of women’s (and girls’) ‘transgression’ of ‘acceptable’ (gender) norms. Comments such as “*They think they are like men*” offered by elder and recently arrived men in Kakuma and stayees in Ler point to the challenges that transforming femininities, gender division of labour and expanding women’s autonomy and awareness of their rights posed to *cieng nuära* gender relations. Debates around *cieng nuära* or ‘our culture’ highlight areas of contestation of gender norms, identities and practices as a result of, in particular, access to education, UN protection and promotion of gender equality for girls and women. Return migration and gendered emplacement show how norms are being (re)negotiated and how practice of ‘our culture’ undergoes transformation due to people’s diverse experiences, social and institutional structures and ideas.

A historical approach to the study of gender relations (see J.Scott 1988) allowed me to locate the continuities of transformations. The arrival and strengthening of the government as a determining force in the lives of the Nuer identified by Hutchinson (1996) as one of the sources of change between the 1930s and 1990s has remained a continuous impetus for transformations. In the aftermath of the 2005 peace agreement, the emerging southern Sudanese state has brought new ideas of justice, gender and human rights into the lives of southern Sudanese communities, including the Nuer. The national policy of including women in government structures has contributed to some changes in women’s leadership and participation in community (and national) politics. Moreover, emergence of women as chiefs, ministers and local government representatives and the promotion of young educated men as local and national leaders

are further proof of the inter-generational and gender challenges to the local leadership structures traditionally based on (male) seniority.

This thesis also underscores the importance of human agency in bringing about change, often through social navigation (Vigh 2006; Utas 2005). While structures, institutions and contexts of transformations give impetus for social change, individuals and communities have to cope with these new challenges. They respond by (re)negotiating their identities, belonging and social relations within new contexts. How much and what type of change comes about was negotiated between different actors and diverse axes of power. For those with access to greater (social and financial) capital and resources change in livelihoods and social relations was much greater than for those who were less able.

Situations of 'flux' pose a challenge to reach definitive conclusions both about the hierarchy of sources and the direction of transformations in social relations. What I have presented here, and what the process of conducting research among populations with such diverse experiences has taught me, is that displacement and post-war in-flux environments provide both rich and complex material for identifying 'change'. This thesis is one possible interpretation, a weighing of multiple narratives and my analysis influenced by my own position and biases. I do not claim to have reached definite answers, but through careful analysis, I arrived at one possible interpretation of the 'in-flux' post-war gender relations of the Nuer. I demonstrate that social ideas, norms and relations are both fluid and resistant, findings which are especially relevant in the context of studying gender.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF GENDER, (FORCED) DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION

3.1. Gender relations 'in-flux'

The findings of this study are located within the study of gender in general and in the context of war, violence, conflict and forced displacement in particular (Turshen and Twarigaramariya1998; Lentin 1997; El Bushra 2000b; Korac 2004; Moser and Clark 2001; Hyndman 2000; Giles and Hyndmann 2004; Turner 1999, 2000; Zarkov 2008).

The key research question was whether forced displacement could undermine women's subordination and open up possibilities for women's empowerment. The main finding of this research is the ambiguous effect of conflict-induced displacement on gender relations. While material bases of women's subordination had been undermined and challenged during displacement and in post-war Nuerland, new sources of power (guns, education and employment) created new gender hegemonies strengthening predominantly the position of (young) men. Yet, women's actions in Ler demonstrate their ability and willingness to defy and contest male privilege. Despite their more limited options in Nuerland, returnee women continue to expand their autonomies and reshape local femininities.

Much of the migration literature situates women as those who either gain or lose in status and importance within the family due to new economic and social circumstances (Buijis 1993: 8). Studies in the last few years have revealed more contradictory effects of migration and displacement on gender relations and family dynamics. For example, Al-Ali's research among Bosnian refugee families (2003a, 2003b) or Salih's investigation of Moroccan migrant women in Italy (2003) show that these dynamics "have shifted in various directions, accounting for empowerment and increased opportunities, as well as impediment and loss among migrant and refugee women" (Al-Ali 2003b: 12). For the Nuer, war and conflict-induced displacement caused abrupt 'crisis' which instigated diverse changes in gender relations. Each of the stages of displacement demonstrated a different set of changes to gender order. Although women suffered disproportionately more than men in the warzones, especially due to being targets of ethnicised gender violence and as a result of more restricted access to migration, forced displacement created opportunities for them to contest male privilege. Post-return emplacement was both an empowering and constraining experience for women and men.

This thesis also demonstrates that war and displacement give rise to multiple, both weakened and reinforced, forms of femininities and masculinities (Zarkov 2008). Militarisation and access to guns led to the emergence of hyper-masculinities which benefited some men. Their male privilege over women and other men was reinforced in some spheres through ethnicised gendered violence and changing rhetoric and sources of power. Yet, disastrous consequences of civil conflicts undermined the core aspect of

masculinity of other men, those unable to protect and provide for their families. In Kakuma, access to education, civil and gender training and employment created *dholi ti ngac ke ngoani* (knowledgeable 'modern' men). While these new masculinities benefited younger men, the older men felt that due to the changed livelihoods in the camp, reliance on UN handouts and lack of control over their own lives, their masculine power was undermined. In addition, the position of men in general was being undermined through the rhetoric of pro-women gender programming, women's access to education, decision-making and UN protection. Male insecurity in times of great turmoil and changing life conditions is common, as illustrated in other literature (Abdi 2006b; Cornwall 2001; Lovett 2001). These findings demonstrate that it is important to move beyond a monolithic notion of the patriarchal (violent) man. By examining closely men's experiences in relation to women's experiences and relative to other men's experiences, we are able to account for fluidity of masculinities and for gender as a constraining concept for both women and men.

The impact of wars on women was also contradictory, beyond women as victims. Rather, women had to manoeuvre fluid multidimensional positions during the conflicts. This sheds light on women's agency, resistance and coping strategies in extreme conditions (see Utas 2003, Zarkov 2008). In the absence of men during wars, women were pushed towards greater autonomy and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, however, women suffered more than men and the exercise of their agency was restricted. In Kakuma despite (and due to) family separation and difficult living conditions, women were able to negotiate a more equal position with men. Girls benefited from access to education and growing awareness of greater possibilities, freedoms and rights within the community. Women's dependence on men was weakened due to expanding educational opportunities and the UN policy of individualised ration cards.

Returnee women continued to widen their presence in different (gendered) spheres and contested male privilege. They sought paid employment in order to access independent income and potentially (or in reality as was the case for most returnee widows) run autonomous households. There was a growing recognition among women that access to education and independent income improved their position within the 'patriarchal bargain'. War-time experiences prompted women to ask about the 'usefulness of men'. Overt acts of 'transgression' of gendered spheres and protest by young (returnee)

women were signs of girls' desire and ability to negotiate greater space and freedoms for themselves.

Settling in Ler underscored that gender relations of the Nuer were in-flux. While men were still considered the heads of households, their previous unquestioned position of power was being challenged by women's (forced) autonomy and greater freedoms in the context of post-war southern Sudan. Wars and displacement undermined the (traditional) material basis for male privilege (Kandyioti 1988; Elson 1991) and introduced new sources of social power and prestige. The authority of senior men was challenged by young educated men, emerging women leaders and women's autonomy. Yet, the new sources of power were also used to reinforce the status and authority of (educated or militarised) men over (uneducated) women (and other men). Due to their disproportionately greater access to education, men's position in the patriarchal bargain (with uneducated women) was at times reinforced. Yet, educated women sought to use their new 'knowledge' as a source of power and skilfully negotiated their gendered possibilities and identities. Through their daily acts of resistance and defiance, they contested the dominant position of men and sought their greater autonomy.

As demonstrated, changes and challenges to hegemonic gender discourses, norms and practices were a personal experience. While some women and men in post-war Nuerland embraced 'changed' discourses of rights which positioned women and men on a more equal footing, others sought to deepen women's subordination. Adopting more gender-equal views, attitudes and practices was not only due to diverse war-time experiences but also a result of personal stands. While some men (and women) saw in the new gender discourses a threat to their position of power and authority, others saw longer-term benefits from power-sharing arrangements. The pace of change was also experienced differently according to geographical, social and economic location. The different values were enshrined in different lifestyles. For some, especially those in towns and market centres with access to government structures, subjected to international organisations' programmes and employment in global oil companies, change was more abrupt. They had greater financial opportunities and were more mobile, with access to services, migration and paid employment creating opportunities of greater autonomy for young men and, to some extent, women. For those in the village, who had remained more isolated, life was more stable.

The thesis highlights how the endurance and transformation of women's subordination are embedded in social institutions, structures and everyday practices that normalise and reproduce asymmetrical relations between women and men (Jackson and Scott 2002; Whitehead 1979; Oakley 2005; Moore 1988; Kabeer 1994; Kandiyoti 1988; Razavi and Miller 1995). By looking closely at how gender and age interplay with social power, my research demonstrates how ideologies and hegemonic discourses of *cieng nuära* (Nuer culture/community/home) or 'our culture' and reliance on cattle complex continue to shape asymmetrical gender positions. In spite of changing sources of power and paradigms (from cattle-blood to human rights), hegemonic (gender) ideas and power structures persist in the face of abrupt social change. Their resilience might be located in the threat of 'losing' identity. Some Nuer argued that if women were greater than men this would bring an end to *nei ti nath* (the Nuer). This underscores the interconnectedness of gender and identity. Change is often resisted as it is perceived as a 'loss of identity'. Other studies considering social change in general (see Hodgson and McCurdy 2001; Lovett 2001; Cornwall 2001) and in the context of migration and forced displacement in particular (Indra 1999a, 1999b; Colson 1999; Pessar 1999; George 2005) consider how 'self' is intertwined with gendered being. For the Nuer, displacement-induced changes to gender identities challenge being a 'real' Nuer. To be fully emplaced and settled-in required 'becoming a (Nuer) adult' through marriage and practice of *cieng nuära* gender identities. Yet, identity is not eternally fixed in some essentialised past, but rather subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power (Hall 2000:1). The returning Nuer women and men were often confronted by changed gender arrangements 'at home'. Hegemonic gender discourses were and continue to be altered and redefined in the context of new social, economic and political realities and new post-war Nuer identities, both at the personal and community levels.

3.2. Gendered migration and emplacement

This study feeds into the debates on gender, migration and displacement (Morokvasic 1984; Philzacklea 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar 1999; Indra 1999a; Hyndman 2000) and demonstrates how war and civil conflicts challenged gendered and generational access to and the nature of mobility. As demonstrated in chapter 5, forced displacement differed for western Nuer women, men, young and old. While boys and

men had greater access to (voluntary or forced) migration, women and girls experienced relatively restricted mobility due to their position within the household. Most women stayed behind, with some becoming refugees, usually due to their personal connections. Those without these social networks became displaced within Sudan. The experiences of Nuer men varied from those of women, but also were diverse among men and women depending on their social capital.

These findings reveal that (im)mobility, migration and displacement are not neutral terms and that they are conditioned, among other things, by gender, age, social position and access to resources (see also Al-Ali 2003). They underscore the diverse experiences, positions of power and privilege between and among women and men. These analyses are helpful in discerning gender factors and the relations between gender, structure and agency in accounting for (transnational) movements. For some women, migration and displacement were not an option since their migration and/or the potential to move either internally or transnationally (across borders) was conditioned by hegemonic normative structures, which they have internalised. Whereas some women have partly challenged these structures, other women are not in a position to counteract the normative and socio-cultural rules they are expected to observe.

The findings also point to multifaceted reasons for mobility and further problematise the grey area between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ migration. As the trajectories of the ‘lost boys’ show, the reasons for the boys’ movement were often intertwined between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ recruitment, search for alternative livelihoods, education and opportunities for supporting the family. Some, in their search for education, became refugees in Kakuma. These acts of social navigation (see Vigh 2006) illustrate how young boys and men often maneuvered their social conditions and war environment to reap benefits from displacement. They also demonstrate how communities and individuals deal with extreme circumstances, using their agency and taking advantage of limited opportunities created by displacement. Thus, wars and displacement are not only destructive forces. They can also open up possibilities of change, learning and expansion of personal and community resources (see Lubkemann 2008; Kibreab 2003; Utas 2003).

The findings from the Kakuma camp contribute to the debates of 'localised modernities' and the intersections between 'gender', displacement and 'modernity' as mediated in the lives and subjectivities of individuals and communities. Through their encounter with a particular 'modernity' based on UN humanitarianism in Kakuma, the Nuer's images of themselves were contested and transformed. This encounter proved to be a creative source of (re)negotiating some aspects of gender relations. Women and men, young and old experienced this 'modernity' dissimilarly due to their distinctive structural positions. These findings have important insights for the humanitarian gender-equality programmes in refugee camps. Educational opportunities benefited mainly young men (and some young women). For them, Kakuma became an empowering experience, a space of expanded possibilities of, as the Nuer argued, 'coming up' and 'becoming *nei ti ciker* (awoken). These experiences reveal personal strategies of survival and maximisation of personal and community social projects. They demonstrate how refugee camp structures not only impact (re)negotiation of gender identities and relations, but also undermine, challenge and create (new) power structures. Similarly to what Malkki demonstrated in her work with Hutu refugees in Tanzania (1995a), refugee camps are sites of active cultural production rather than isolated 'acultural' sites, cut-off from the rest of the world, as they are at times portrayed. For the Nuer, they were one of the points in their personal and community trajectories.

This study draws important lessons for the understanding of return processes of displaced populations, by adding a gender and generational analysis. The findings demonstrate that the 'returning' Nuer women and men in Ler experienced and negotiated settling-in differently not only based on gender and age, but also due to the length of displacement, marital status and access to resources. *Beben cieng* (homecoming) was both an empowering and disempowering experience. (Re)uniting with family and kin members was the first step in *beben cieng* and had diverse gendered consequences. However, in the absence of nuclear family, emplacement process involved forging new social bonds and reinterpreting kinship relations. This included invention of fictive kinship ties linked to the shared experiences of displacement as well as re-casting distant kin as close ones. Emplacement was thus a processes of becoming and being part of a community, a *cieng,* and finding one's own place within it. For some (older and some younger men) 'return' was equated with

greater possibilities, while for others (mostly young women) it meant the constraining of rights enjoyed in Kakuma. Those who were able to rely on previously forged social networks, family and kin support and access to resources settled in faster. As in the case of Ethiopian (Hammond 2004a) and Eritrean returnees (Kibreab 2003), this underscores the importance of social networks in the emplacement processes, especially when other assistance, governmental or international, is not forthcoming.

Hammond (1999) argues that instead of focusing in repatriation on reconstruction, reintegration and rehabilitation, we should be talking about creation, construction and integration. From this perspective, refugees offer a new insight into studying social change, the construction of communities and changing meanings of identity, culture, home and geographical place. My research points to another creative aspect of 'return' process: engendering oneself, negotiating gender identity and (re)creating 'home' through marriage and fictive social networks. The case of conflict-induced displacement and after-return emplacement shows how 'communities' and gendered 'our culture' discourses are being forged, shaped and (re)constructed when people, ideas and practices move between places. Returnees contributions to the community construction included different social and gender ideas and practices that returning Nuer women and men brought, in addition to education, skills and knowledge gained during displacement. Since place-making involves "a construction, rather than a discovery of difference", (gender) identity is not a static, ahistorical and possessed by individual or collective social actors (Gupta and Ferguson 2001). The gendered making and remaking of identities, norms and relations instigated by displacement show that identity is a mobile and transforming relation of difference.

Negotiations around changing gender concepts show how emplacement is both a creative and (de)constructing process experienced at personal and communal levels. These findings are situated within the wider debates of 'home' among the displaced and draw lessons for development policies in post-conflict reconstruction. For the Nuer women and men, the meaning and practice of making a place called 'home' was intertwined with the gendered and generational experiences of being a person, a woman or man, creating a household and being part of a community. The study of gender and age can bring important insights to contemporary conceptualisations of the relationship between place, identity, movement and 'home'. As Gardner points out, changing

bodies (due to migration and time) "play an important role in how places are perceived and acted upon" (2002: 213). The Nuer example illustrates the reciprocal relationship between the place and the body (both of returnees and 'stayees'). It is in the dialectical interaction between returnees and stayees that a gendered (and generational) meaning and practice of a 'home' emerges.

4. REFLECTING ON AREAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Does this thesis convey a full picture of changes in gender relations in the last two decades among the Nuer? Does telling the stories of the displacement, return and settling-in in the manner that I have chosen leave out other untold tales? How have other Nuer from Eastern or Central Nuerland experienced displacement and changes in gender relations? What would be the views and gendered and generational experiences of those who were displaced within Sudan, other parts of East Africa and throughout the world? Are the particular methods used to uncover the experiences of displacement and emplacement leaving out other potential interpretations? What are the long-term trends of the currently 'in-flux' gender relations? In what follows, I discuss these questions as a way of addressing some of the gaps in this thesis and suggest areas for further research.

4.1. Other Nuer, other displacements

I focused my research among one particular community of the Western Nuer, those who came from or from around Ler. This method gave me an opportunity to study in-depth ongoing practices and changes in gender relations among Western Nuer in Kakuma and later in southern Sudan. I am fully aware that I am only telling a very small part of the displacement stories of the Nuer (and southern Sudanese in general). A comparison across different Nuer communities would provide a broader picture of the nature, processes and extent of changes in gender relations among the Nuer, more generally. For example, Hutchinson carried out her research in the 1980s among Eastern Nuer as well as other Western communities. Thus, there is data available on the changes in social and gender relations among those groups. Carrying out follow-up research among these communities would provide a wider geographical comparative perspective on the processes of change and continuities.

Another limitation of the current study relevant to the wider implications for the processes of change is that the study is limited to one site of displacement. Due to the long presence of the camp and the well-established work of international organisations, Kakuma provided a very particular and rich site for research on challenges to gender practices among the Nuer and other southern Sudanese refugees. However, this tells only a partial and particular story of displacement of the Nuer whom the wars scattered across the country, the region and the world. While I have consulted available studies on the Nuer in Khartoum (Hutchinson 1996), Ethiopia (Falge 1999) and the US (Shandy 2007; Holtzman 2000), a wider comparative approach with ethnographic investigation in several sites of displacement, for example in Khartoum, Egypt, Ethiopia and settlement in the US, Canada or Australia would allow investigation of other sources of and trends in transformation of gender relations. A cross-community and cross-displacement study might reveal a very different picture of the ongoing processes of change than that which I have portrayed here.

The method I chose for conducting ethnography of displacement and emplacement allowed me to carry out multi-sited research in Kakuma and in the site of 'return' in Nuerland. However, this also meant that I was unable to spend a longer time in each site. A longer investigation of the conditions in refugee camps as well as the site of 'return' would provide possibilities of both deepening the areas of inquiry and gaining insights from a wider group of individuals.

4.2. Long-term changes and other areas of inquiry

Since this ethnography is about changes in gender relations among the Nuer in exile and in Nuerland, this is only a partial narrative. While it captures some transformations in gender relations, these are rather ongoing 'in-flux' processes. Their long-term consequences for gender relations and gender asymmetrical power have to be assessed through another long-term follow-up study. Studying change is a temporal and spatial process. While I chose to study these processes at a particular point of time, just after the signing of the peace agreement and when many Nuer started to return, a follow-up study would allow for further investigation of the resilience of continuities and changes. It would allow to ask to what extent hegemonic gender discourses are resistant

and/or changeable and whether women continue to progress or regress in their transition to greater equality.

One area of further inquiry that would enhance understanding of social change in Nuerland is the impact of state policies on gender practices in the communities. In particular, I suggest examining the role of 'gender mainstreaming' and gender equality policies advocated by the southern Sudanese government. How do national and legal norms translate into localised practices and norms? As I have pointed out, the emergence of women politicians, community leaders and court chiefs has been one of the areas of change resulting partially from government policies. While I touch on this issue in this thesis, this topic deserves deeper investigation to account for the role of the state in the transformation of gender relations and practices.

Longer-term research would also make it possible to account for longer-term effects of the ongoing transformations in marriage negotiations and practices or on the changing meaning of money and livelihoods and their influence on the emerging autonomy of women. Marriage in particular, as I have indicated, provides a lens to view the practice and negotiation of gender relations. Some ongoing transformations include young men and women gaining greater room to negotiate their preferences and choices and changing bridewealth practices (from cows to money). A longer-term and focused investigation of these issues would provide information on the shifting power relations between and among women and men, and young and old. In addition, building on the small qualitative survey of marriage histories that I carried out among the Ler residents, a more thorough investigation of divorce rates, marriage arrangements and negotiations would make it possible to account for longer-term developments. While war, experiences in displacement, education, Christianity and the state have brought different ideas of self, community and identity, the marriage process, reproduction and the consequent passage to full adulthood for women and men remains a primary basis of gender norms. A longer-term view into marriage processes would allow us to account for the changes in norms regulating relations of households and communities.

I would like to end this thesis with a final thought on the prospects of 'returning home' of the Nuer *jäal* (guests/returnees) in the current post-war environment in southern Sudan. While since 2005 peace has come to Nuer communities, its lasting prospects are

more elusive. In the build-up to the forthcoming presidential elections in April 2010 and the subsequent nation-wide referendum on the future of the Sudanese state in 2011, there are increasing incidents of clashes among southerners and between northerners and southerners. There is also much work that needs to be done among the Nuer communities themselves, to reconcile, prosper and build stable lives. For now, Nyakuol, Kuok and Nyariek have decided to continue their settling-in process in Ler. "*I have finally my home*," Kuok told me on the phone in September 2009. "*I am married now and feel that I found my home and my place*." Are they all finally 'home'? What will the home offer in the view of current insecurities for the Nuer whose lives are followed throughout this study? How and where will they create their homes and how permanent will they be? What gender relations will they practise and how will they defind themselves as gendered individuals within an ever-changing post-war Nuerland? These are, however, questions for the future.

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ANNEXE 1

Organisations present in Kakuma camp and their activities:

- **The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)** is responsible for tree-planting and ecological programs in Kakuma.
- **FilmAid** raises awareness and disseminates information through film, posters and brochures on health, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and repatriation.
- **Handicap International (HI)** is responsible for mine-awareness campaigns for Sudanese returnees.
- **The International Rescue Committee (IRC)** runs health care delivery and nutrition and prepares health care screening for Sudanese repatriates. They support four clinics and a hospital in the camp.
- **The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** has been involved in resettlement of refugees to third countries and as of 2006 is assisting UNHCR in repatriation of Sudanese.
- **The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)** is UNHCR's long-term partner in Kakuma, operating as the main service provider to refugees. Its responsibilities range from food distribution, water supply, community services and education to income generation initiatives. It is also involved in repatriation of Sudanese.
- **The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK)** offers peace education, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health activities.
- **Salesians of Don Bosco in Kenya (DBK)** provides vocational and skills training, including income-generating micro-credit schemes, tailoring, carpentry, computer and electrical training for men and women. In 2006, Don Bosco was also involved in job placement for Sudanese willing to repatriate to Sudan.
- **Windle Trust Kenya (WTK)** has been involved in adult and tertiary education programmes for refugees, including provision of scholarships for students to take up education in Kenyan schools and universities. WTK in collaboration with the Ministry of Education managed the Teacher Training College in Kakuma for primary school teachers.
- **World Food Program (WFP)** is responsible for food distribution in the camp.